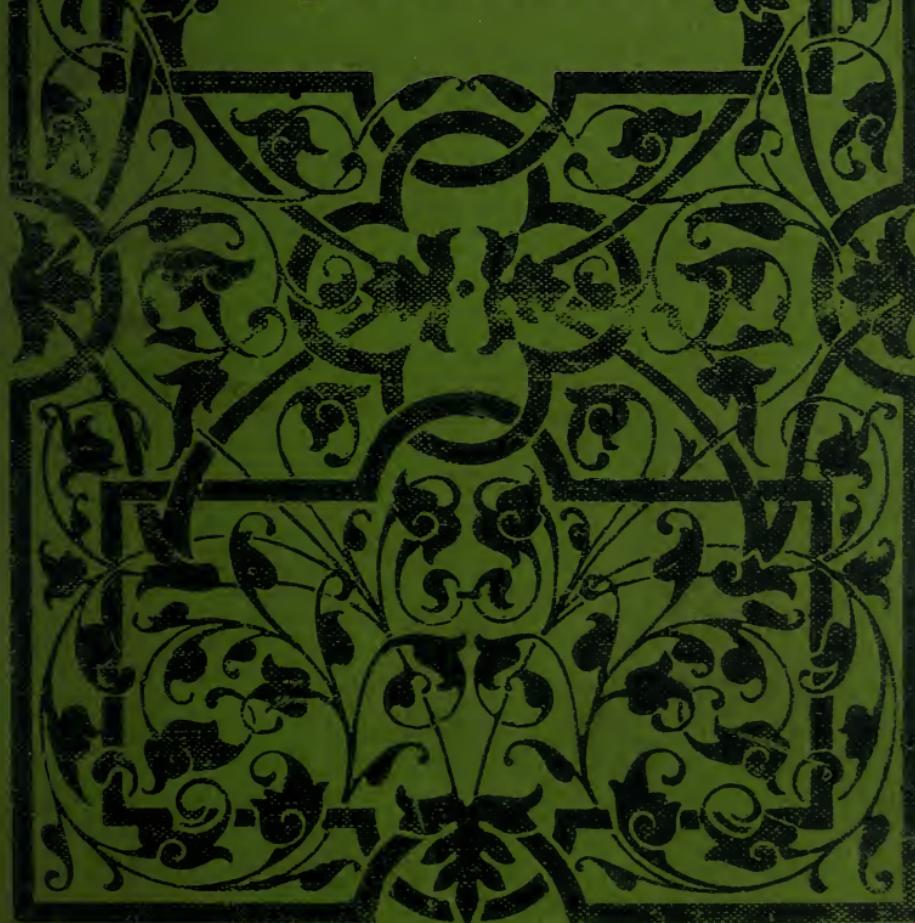


# ENGLISH WRITERS

▲ GILBERT ▲





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# ENGLISH WRITERS

BY

R. V. GILBERT

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FACTS ABOUT THE LIFE  
AND WORK OF ALL ENGLISH  
WRITERS, BOTH OF PROSE  
AND POETRY ARE GIVEN HERE

PHILADELPHIA  
THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY  
1913

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*This book is dedicated  
to  
my Father and Mother  
by whose unselfish lives  
and untiring efforts it  
was made possible*



## Preface

CHRONOLOGY and brevity have been the ends sought for in writing this little volume. It is assumed that for a beginner a bird's-eye view of the subject is the end most to be sought for, and that having attained this, he is free to specialize and master details. Too often in approaching a subject like literature we become confused with details and lose ourselves in a labyrinth from which we are extracted only at the expense of much time and effort. Too often, also, teachers permit, nay compel, preparatory students to do the same thing by placing in their hands a text-book where the general and important lines of thought are not sufficiently differentiated from the minutiae to become impressed upon the mind.

This book is an effort to eliminate such confusion. It grew from notes the author used—in the failure to find a suitable text-book—while teaching literature. If it will in any way help teachers similarly situated, and prove useful to those not students, in the strict sense of the term,

who have been debarred from studying literature because the subject appeared too large and complicated, the labors spent in preparing this book will be considered amply rewarded.

Due acknowledgment is hereby given to Pan-coast for the scheme of dividing the history of English Literature into the four given divisions. I desire further to acknowledge the aid given by Long's excellent *English Literature*, Halleck's *History of English Literature*, Moulton's *Library of Literary Criticism*, and the inspiring lectures of eminent men on the subject.

I desire also to express my thanks to Prof. Luther B. Henderson, A. M., B. D., and Prof. Thomas L. Cline, A. M., for valuable assistance given in correcting and revising the manuscript.

R. V. G.

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## I. Period of Preparation

Cædmon	.	.	.	.	.	Cir. 670
Cynewulf	.	.	.	.	.	—
Bede, The Venerable	.	.	.	.	.	673-735
King Alfred	.	.	.	.	.	Cir. 851-901
Layamon	.	.	.	.	.	Cir. 1205
Sir John Mandeville	.	.	.	.	.	1300-1372 (?)
William Langland	.	.	.	.	.	1322-1400 (?)
John Wycliffe	.	.	.	.	.	1324-1384
Geoffrey Chaucer	.	.	.	.	.	1340-1400
William Caxton	.	.	.	.	.	1422 (?)-1492

## II. Period of Italian Influence

Sir Thomas Malory	.	.	.	.	.	1430-1496 (?)
Sir Thomas More	.	.	.	.	.	1478-1535
Thomas Sackville	.	.	.	.	.	1536-1608
Edmund Spenser	.	.	.	.	.	1552-1599
Richard Hooker	.	.	.	.	.	1554-1600
Sir Philip Sidney	.	.	.	.	.	1554-1586
Thomas Kidd	.	.	.	.	.	1557-1596
Francis Bacon	.	.	.	.	.	1561-1626
Christopher Marlowe	.	.	.	.	.	1564-1593
William Shakespeare	.	.	.	.	.	1564-1616
John Donne	.	.	.	.	.	1573-1631
Ben Jonson	.	.	.	.	.	1573 (?)-1637

<sup>1</sup> This is a modification of an Outline by the Author, published by C. W. Bardeen, Syracuse, N. Y.

Beaumont	{	.	.	.	.	1584-1616
Fletcher	}	.	.	.	.	1579-1625
Philip Massinger	.	.	.	.	.	1584-1640
John Milton	.	.	.	.	.	1608-1674
Samuel Butler	.	.	.	.	.	1612-1680
John Bunyan	.	.	.	.	.	1628-1688

### III. Period of French Influence

John Dryden	.	.	.	.	1631-1700
Daniel De Foe	.	.	.	.	1659-1731
Jonathan Swift	.	.	.	.	1617-1745
Sir Richard Steele	.	.	.	.	1672-1729
Joseph Addison	.	.	.	.	1672-1719
Alexander Pope	.	.	.	.	1688-1774
Samuel Richardson	.	.	.	.	1689-1761
Henry Fielding	.	.	.	.	1707-1754
Dr. Samuel Johnson	.	.	.	.	1709-1784

### IV. Modern Period

#### (A) The Romantic Movement

James Thomson	.	.	.	.	1700-1748
Lawrence Sterne	.	.	.	.	1713-1768
Thomas Grey	.	.	.	.	1716-1771
William Collins	.	.	.	.	1721-1759
Tobias Smollett	.	.	.	.	1721-1771
Oliver Goldsmith	.	.	.	.	1728-1774
William Cowper	.	.	.	.	1731-1800
James Macpherson	.	.	.	.	1736-1796
James Boswell	.	.	.	.	1740-1795
Thomas Chatterton	.	.	.	.	1752-1770
George Crabbe	.	.	.	.	1757-1827

Robert Burns . . . .	1759-1795
William Wordsworth . . . .	1770-1850
Samuel Taylor Coleridge . . . .	1772-1834
Sir Walter Scott . . . .	1771-1832
Walter Savage Landor . . . .	1775-1864
Charles Lamb . . . .	1775-1834
Jane Austen . . . .	1775-1817
Thomas De Quincey . . . .	1785-1859
Lord Byron . . . .	1788-1824
Percy Bysshe Shelley . . . .	1792-1822
John Keats . . . .	1795-1821

## (B) Victorian Age

## 1. THE PROSE WRITERS

Thomas Carlyle . . . .	1795-1881
Thomas Babington Macaulay . .	1800-1859
John Newman . . . .	1801-1890
Bulwer-Lytton . . . .	1803-1873
William Makepeace Thackeray	1811-1863
Charles Dickens . . . .	1812-1870
Charlotte Brontë . . . .	1816-1855
Emily Brontë . . . .	1818-1848
James Froude . . . .	1818-1894
George Eliot . . . .	1819-1880
John Ruskin . . . .	1819-1900
Matthew Arnold . . . .	1822-1888
George Meredith . . . .	1828-1909
John Green . . . .	1837-1883
Robert Louis Stevenson . . . .	1850-1894
Henry Drummond . . . .	1851-1897

## 2. POETS

Elizabeth Barrett . . . .	1806-1861
---------------------------	-----------

Lord Tennyson . . . .	1809-1892
Robert Browning . . . .	1812-1889
Arthur Clough . . . .	1819-1861
Jean Ingelow . . . .	1820-1897
Carey Sisters . . . .	1820-24-1871
Adelaide Proctor . . . .	1825-1864
Dante Gabriel Rossetti . . . .	1828-1882
Christina Rossetti . . . .	1830-1894
William Morris . . . .	1834-1896
Algernon Swinburne . . . .	1837-1909
Walter Pater . . . .	1838-1894
Rudyard Kipling . . . .	1865-

# English Writers

## CHAPTER I PERIOD OF PREPARATION

### I. INTRODUCTION: THE ANGLO-SAXONS.

THE question is being daily asked among linguists, Why is it that the English language, heterogeneous and irregular as it is, when compared with other tongues, is to-day fast becoming the world language? Equally well might the sociologist inquire why it is that English customs, English inventions, and English wares are being appropriated everywhere. Likewise may the student of literature wonder why the poetry and prose of the English-speaking races by far eclipses the literary productions of the other races of the world; why no other nation has produced a Shakespeare, a Milton, or a Tennyson. To answer these questions we must go back to the peat-bogs and fenlands of northern Germany, and Jutland,—

the home of the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes.

The physical and mental world presents some strange facts. One great law is, that the greater the obstacle the greater the success. The refining fire purifies gold ; the irritation of the oyster forms the pearl ; the fierce wind-storms toughen the giant oak. The great life is made greater by the obstacles thrown athwart its path, and genius succeeds never so well as patient, persevering work.

It was so with the Anglo-Saxons. Perhaps no nation has been fated by fortune to inhabit so dreary a land. The country was marshy. The sky was ever lowering and overcast with clouds ready to drop their watery burden. Seldom, indeed, does Nature display so dismal an aspect. The winters were long, cold, and rigorous. The sun set early, the long winter night beginning in mid-afternoon. Crouching before the fire, in his hut, through those long winter nights, the Anglo-Saxon had ample time to reflect how Nature had promised him much and given him little. Little did he know, little could he know, that he and his fellow tribesmen were being forged on the mighty anvil of the elements by an Omniscient Hand, and

that those latent elements of greatness were being moulded and tempered so that his posterity, thousands of years hence, would be fit for a world supremacy.

But what immediate effect did this gloomy climate have upon him? Just that which might have been expected. It made the Anglo-Saxon a thinker, a philosopher. It gave his mind a somber cast and his expression a seriousness that was not found among other races, and which led the bard on the Avon more than a thousand years later to say

“To be or not to be, that is the question.”<sup>1</sup>

And which caused the first great romantic poet of the nineteenth century to exclaim :

“Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;  
The soul that rises with us, our life’s Star,  
Hath elsewhere had its setting.”<sup>2</sup>

But the Anglo-Saxon was more than a mere thinker or theorizer, he was a Man, with all that that implies. Physically almost a giant, he was brave, warlike, and adventurous. In the teeth of a gale he skimmed upon the sea, with his open boat. He

<sup>1</sup> *Hamlet.*

<sup>2</sup> *Intimations of Immortality.*

laughed at fear. He was a buccaneer and a savage. And yet, hidden in the dark forests or almost submerged in the morasses, he exhibited traits and virtues which Rome in the golden age of her civilization lacked. He respected and exalted woman; he loved his home, and overshadowed it with a sacred halo of devotion. Brave, liberty-loving, and serious; shaped by the anvil-strokes of a pitiless and inhospitable climate, the Anglo-Saxon faced the world to do or die. And it was that resolution that made the haughty Roman, in the gilded palace of the Cæsars, tremble. It was that same spirit that, centuries afterward, destroyed a Spanish Armada. It followed the Iron Duke and forever ended the career of the Man of Destiny on fatal Waterloo. It showed itself in the trenches of Bunker Hill and the misery of Valley Forge. It sailed unknown oceans, explored dark continents, and civilized nations.

Realizing this we shall pursue our study of English literature with a new and added interest, knowing that it is the expression of a mighty race,—a race that has surmounted great obstacles and faced tremendous issues, and, ultimately triumphant, has stamped the seal of its greatness upon the coinage of all humanity. We may fit-

tingly say with the poet, in closing this introduction :

“ The Saxon legions conquer every foe.

\* \* \* \* \*

Our gauntlet at invaders shall be hurled ;  
Lords of the land and emperors of the sea,  
The Eagle and the Lion rule the world.”<sup>1</sup>

## II. THE BEOWULF.

It is a matter of historical note that a race produces but one, or at most, two or three epics in its lifetime. And yet the study of the *Beowulf* brings us face to face with the startling fact that the Anglo-Saxon race, not yet emancipated from the chains of barbarism, before the various concomitant forces that have made the race great had united, had produced an epic that ranks as one of the greatest epics of any language.

After hundreds of years of civilization, the Hindoos produce the *Rig-Veda*; after centuries of divine guidance, the Hebrews produce the Book of Job; after a great lapse of time, and then by the aid of an Englishman, the Icelanders submit their national epic, the *Kalevala*; but our race, like the legendary god Apollo, rises from its

<sup>1</sup> *The Eagle and the Lion*, by Walter Malone.

cradle, and, wrapped in its swaddling clothes, sings a world-epic with the hand of a master!

The following is the story in brief: Hrothgar, king of the Danes, builds a magnificent mead-hall for his thanes and warriors to carouse in. The mead-hall is called Heorot. One night after the warriors have feasted and caroused their full, and are sleeping, a monster, half man and half beast, named Grendel, comes stalking over the moor and entering the banqueting hall, slays thirty warriors and devours them. This occurs night after night until no one dares to be at the mead-hall any longer, through fear of Grendel. The king was sorely perplexed as to what he could do. As one translator puts it:

“ Then seethed Hrothgar, helm of the Scyldings,  
For all his wisdom he could not avert the evil;  
That strife was too strong, loathsome, and tedious,  
That came on the people, malice-brought misery,  
Greatest of night-woes.”<sup>1</sup>

But Beowulf, “king of the Wiedergeats,” hears about it. He at once orders his “wave-rider” (*i. e.*, ship) to be put in trim, and is soon skimming over the “whale-road” (sea) to fight the monster. The plans are soon arranged. Hrothgar is to

<sup>1</sup> *Beowulf*.

give a great feast as in the old times, and when Grendel comes, Beowulf will attack him. And so all things happen. In the dead of night, the bloodthirsty Grendel, all unsuspecting, comes, and Beowulf, disdaining a sword, grapples with him. Grendel, in the first onslaught, finds that he has met his master, and would gladly flee, but cannot. In the struggle which ensues massive tables are wrenched loose and overthrown, and the seasoned oak benches, inlaid with bone and ivory, are broken. Finally Grendel, in his efforts to get away, has his arm torn off, and flees to his den under the sea where he lives with his half-human mother. The next day Beowulf pursues him to his lair. Into this ghostly, dragon-infested lake Beowulf descends. After nine days he returns from the terrible conflict with Grendel's mother, with battered armor, but also with the head of Grendel. He is feasted and showered with gifts. He returns home where he reigns many long, peaceful years, after which he fights a fire-breathing dragon that guards a hoard of treasure. He is mortally wounded in the conflict and dies, but not until he has seen the treasure that he has won for his people.

The origin of the *Beowulf* is shrouded in mystery.

There is but one manuscript of it in existence, and this forms the sole aid to scholars in their efforts to solve its authorship, and this dates back to the seventh century. That it was sung in mead-halls many years before it was put in written form cannot be doubted.

Whether Beowulf was a true or a fictitious personage we do not know. As regards this the greatest diversity of opinion prevails. Some maintain that the story—minus the fanciful element naturally accruing, through the years of tradition that preserved it—is true; that there was a real Beowulf and that he fought a real wild beast. Others go to the opposite extreme and would interpret it all as a gigantic metaphor; that the “Grendel” was a destructive plague—epidemics such as malaria, etc., were common to the marshy country of the Anglo-Saxons—and that Beowulf was some wise chieftain that drained the swamps or in some way stopped the plague.

But it is not for us to speculate how much is true and how much is false. We prefer to believe that it is founded on some true incident that has been expanded and added to through the passing centuries until it has reached its present form. It

is interesting to us because in it we see the manners and customs, the aspirations, and the religious beliefs of our ancient forefathers. It reflects their lives perfectly,—nay the very physical elements of nature herself. And to this end it has proven a rich treasure-house for antiquarians.

The *Beowulf* loses much in translation. But such is the strength of the heavy thought-laden Saxon words, the compounding and parallelism, that even in modern English we can detect those forces that are in after years to ascend to the sublime heights of a *Paradise Lost* or an *In Memoriam*.

### III. GEOFFREY CHAUCER (1340-1400).

Before we can enter upon the study of Chaucer or at all understand the greatness of his genius or the significance of his works, we must, very briefly, bridge the gap between him and the times as depicted in the *Beowulf*.

A few words as to the technique of Anglo-Saxon poetry may not, perhaps, be out of place here. Anglo-Saxon poetry lacked both rhyme and meter. Its place was supplied by parallelism and alliteration, the latter doubtless accentuated by the sharp twangs of the harp of the singing

scop or gleeman (the former a maker of verse, and the latter only a singer). Coupled with the strong imagery and compound wording of the poetry itself, it was very effective. The following remarkable translation of a portion of the *Beowulf* will illustrate it :

“ An unwinsome wood,  
Water stood under it.  
Ghastly with gore,  
It was grief to all Danes;  
A sight of sorrow  
To the Scyldings’ friends.”

After the Norman Conquest (1066 A. D.), all this was changed, and the original parallelisms and alliterative forms were supplanted by the modern scheme of rhyme and meter.

Space does not permit even a partial discussion of the inspired Cædmon, the father of English poetry, nor the philosophical Cynewulf who has given us some of the best Anglo-Saxon poetry. These men lived and composed about the seventh century. We pass also the beautiful life of the Venerable Bede (born 673 A. D.) and that of King Alfred (Cir. 851-901, A. D.), statesman-scholar, who found his kingdom in chaos and left it in peace, who lifted on high the torch of learning

when his country was dark with ignorance and superstition. We hurry on to the Norman Conquest. So far we have observed two elements in our race: First, the Anglo-Saxons proper, second, the Britons with which they came in contact when they invaded England (460 (?) A. D.) and who were composed of different tribes. We will now note the third element,—the Norman.

The Norman Conquest had a most salutary effect upon the English race. Before that they were still Anglo-Saxons; now they are English in the strict sense of the term. The Normans, as conquerors, became the ruling class. The Anglo-Saxons were forced into a lower position. They were the “hewers of wood and drawers of water,” while their Norman masters lorded it over them, and attempted to force upon them the Norman (or modified French) language and customs. But here their power ended. They could conquer the Anglo-Saxons, but they could not make them Normans. And so for centuries the Anglo-Saxons clung to their native language and customs with an unparalleled stubbornness and tenacity. But in the end the inevitable happened. The Normans began to lose their disdain for the Anglo-Saxons, while the latter

began to hate their masters less bitterly. The two races began to intermarry, customs and manners began to be exchanged, the two languages fused, and the two racial streams that had flowed side by side for over two centuries became one. The people were no longer Anglo-Saxon or Norman,—they were English. That is why the English language is the strong language it is. The best elements of both languages survived, and hence the wealth of synonyms. That is why the English race is a ruling race. The slow massive intellect of the Saxon was enlivened and rendered supple and acute by the versatile element of the Norman-French.

Chaucer, therefore, is interesting to us because he is the first exponent of this great amalgamation. He writes not in Anglo-Saxon, like Cædmon or Cynewulf, or Latin like the Bede,—centuries before—nor in French, as the courtiers did, but in English. He is the great mouthpiece of a unified language and a unified race. His great work is the *Canterbury Tales*. Twenty-nine pilgrims, beside himself, assemble at Tabard Inn for a pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. They agree that each shall tell two stories on the way thither and two on the re-

turn. Scarce a fourth of that number are, however, told. All the different classes of society are represented. There is a Knight, a Priest, a Pardoner, a Franklin, a Student, etc. Chaucer rides among them and with twinkling eyes notes the little traits and mannerisms that show forth character. He tells us these little incidents and in that way brings us to see the various personalities as clearly as if we were intimately acquainted with each one.

Chaucer's spelling is archaic, and at first glance many words seem strange and foreign. But as we are entertained by his kindly wit and inimitable style we feel that we have at last reached firm ground from which we may pursue our study of English Literature with interest.

While we would fain pass on to the greater personages of Literature, there are still some names that command our attention. Among these, JOHN WYCLIFF (1324 (?)–1384) may not be omitted. A personality that could inspire hundreds to suffer persecution, and a scholarship which enabled him to translate the Bible, mark him great. Wycliff's translation of the Bible marked an epoch in English thought, and its influence was even greater when almost a century later WILLIAM

CAXTON (1422 (?)-1492) set up the first printing press at Westminster.

A work of scarcely less importance was that of *Piers Plowman*, by WILLIAM LANGLAND (1322-1400) (?) for this was the beginning of a great literature on the brotherhood of man and the attempts to better the lot of those who live neighbors to poverty. The author would have us believe that the poem was a vision, but the sterling truths it enunciates are certainly far from visionary. In quite another vein was the book of *Travels* of SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE (1300-1372) (?). This is a pseudonym, and the book is filled with the veriest Arabian Nights tales, but in it may be detected the germs of the novel.

A century later SIR THOMAS MALORY (1430-1496) (?) wrote his famous *Morte d'Arthur*, a collection of the legends of the mythical King Arthur, that was, in the hands of Tennyson, to be the foundation for his masterly *Idylls of the King*. Somewhat later still, SIR THOMAS MORE (1478-1535) created a stir with his *Utopia*. This is a book very much like Plato's *Republic*, that outlines an ideal state where every one has plenty and no one is rich ; where social evils are banished and every one enjoys to the full the fruits of his

labor. The book has become almost a classic in our language. The plain, matter-of-fact person sees nothing in it but absurdity, but to the philosophic social reformer it will always be a mine, rich in plans and ideas for social betterment.

Altogether this was a period in the history of England's literature indicative of great results. Like the Biblical book of Genesis, it was a period of beginnings. We pause here to discuss very briefly another great literary form,—the drama.

## CHAPTER II

### PERIOD OF ITALIAN INFLUENCE

#### IV. THE RISE OF THE DRAMA.

DURING the time of Chaucer, English society presented a strange antithesis. It was in the midst of Feudalism. Knights, armed cap-à-pie, rode hither and thither in search of adventure. Prodigies of valor were performed, magnificent feasts were given, and splendid balls were held. Even war assumed a tournament-like aspect. Outside of all this sham and glitter was the cold drear world of the poverty-stricken peasant. Afflicted with hunger, cold, and the terrible Black Plague his life was one long drawn-out misery. But things began to change. England was at war with her ancient enemy, France. Victory followed victory, and it was noticed that the brawny files of English peasantry availed quite as much as the spectacular charges of the knights. And when, at Crecy, the Black Prince won his spurs for a victory against overwhelming odds, the British

peasantry won theirs, also. For that victory was won not by the gilded lances of the lordly knights, but by the cloth-yard arrows and yew-tree bows of the sturdy yeomen.

Before Chaucer's time this state of affairs socially had been faithfully reflected in the literature. The stories in prose and poetry were all about pale maidens besieged in castles by monstrous green dragons, and rescued by some knight who was the incarnation of nobleness and chivalry. But Chaucer changed all this. His stories are full of the healthy red blood of English common sense.

After Chaucer, no writers worthy of our attention appeared for several centuries. But during all this time and for hundreds of centuries something was being shaped and fashioned that in the coming years was destined to play an important rôle in the literature of all nations, and that was the drama. Let it be distinctly understood at the outset that, first, last and always, the drama originated in the ritual of religion, be that religion heathen or Christian.

The inventive genius of the Greeks first produced the drama, growing as it did out of the ritual in the temple services. And under Sophocles

and Euripides it reached a grandeur never afterward attained. The Romans copied from the Greeks, but produced only comedies. Under Plautus and Terence the comedy was fairly well handled. One writer indeed, Seneca, attempted tragedy, but his works are not to be compared to the old Greek tragedians. When Christianity was introduced an outcry was raised against the drama, chiefly because of the many hymns it contained which extolled the greatness of the heathen deities. That, and the chaos following the dismemberment of the Roman Empire in the West, together with the consequent oncoming of the Dark Ages, completely silenced the drama. So completely had the drama disappeared that when, during the Renaissance, some of the lost plays of Plautus and Terence were found, they were not recognized as plays, but as stories.

It remained, then, for the literary world to laboriously reinvent the drama, which it did after a great lapse of time. And again the beginning was in religion. The humble monk, copying Sacred Writ, was no doubt impressed with the dramatic character of the events narrated. So the simple church service began to be more complete and more complicated. Certain Biblical scenes

were rehearsed at appropriate occasions. They were arranged more and more, enlarged, and unified, until suddenly, long before the world realized it, the drama was born again.

One of the first scenes of which we have any record was the *Quem Quæritis* (Whom do ye seek) played at Easter morning. It was simple. One man stood at a rude improvised sepulcher, and after speaking was answered by the choir. Step by step, as time went on, other characters were introduced, and gradually other scenes, *e. g.*, Christmas, the Passion, the Temptation, etc. Soon other parts of the Bible were used, and before long a complete cycle was produced, depicting Biblical scenes from the Creation to Doomsday. By this time the various trades had established "guilds." Eventually each guild had a special part of the cycle. The cycles were generally played on Corpus Christi Day, on open platforms mounted on wheels. Inasmuch as the people were almost wholly illiterate, these plays were a source of great education.

So far in these plays—called Miracle Plays—nothing original had been produced. But inventive genius finally began to assert itself in a new type called the Morality Plays, where abstract

characters, as Virtue and Vice discoursed. Finally in the lapse of centuries, through a gradual process of evolution, purely secular plays began to be produced, which in after years should culminate in the masterpieces of a *Dr. Faustus*, a *Hamlet* or a *King Lear*.

#### V. NON-DRAMATIC WRITERS OF THE ELIZABETHAN AGE

From the sunny coasts of Italy a great wave of enlightenment was spreading; it was not limited to one country or political division, but it spread over Europe, gathering impetus as it advanced until it culminated in a most wonderful awakening in England. This movement is known as the Renaissance, and the awakening of England, and as the Elizabethan Age. Never before in the history of mankind had there been results equal to those of this period. We defer a further discussion of this age to the next section and hasten to the important non-dramatic writers.

EDMUND SPENSER (1552-1599) was undoubtedly one of the greatest of these. Spenser was a Londoner by birth, but the story of his life,—his trials and persecutions while living among the half wild Irish, his poverty, and his long wait for

royal favor,—these are all things about which we are not concerned. For Spenser was a subjective poet and the things of the external world mattered little so far as influencing his works was concerned. It is his *Faerie Queene* that concerns us, for it is one of the great works of English literature. The *Faerie Queene* is a great allegory, planned to comprise twenty-four books; each book was to tell of the adventure of a knight who personified some moral virtue. Spenser, however, completed but six books. These knights go out from the court of Gloriana, the fairy queen, and perform their exploits. The style will at first seem odd and the spelling is still archaic, but one has no trouble in reading it as is seen from the first line:

“A Gentle Knight was pricking o'er the plaine.”

His other works are *The Shepherde's Calendar* (pastoral), *Amoretti* (love songs), and *Epithalamion* (i. e., upon marriage, written for his own marriage).

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY (1554–1586) is known to us far more because of his personality than because of his works,—which, indeed, were not published till after his death. The *Arcadia*, the *Apologie*

*for Poetrie*, and *Astrophel and Stella* are the most important. He has gone down in history as the ideal gentleman.

FRANCIS BACON (1561–1626) is known as the father of the inductive method of scientific research. While this is not strictly true, yet it is not to be disputed that he brought it into prominence. His dictum was to test everything and anything and to establish laws from these investigations and not from hearsay. His great work was the *Novum Organum*. It was written in Latin—the language of science—but, like the *Faerie Queene*, was never completed. Enough was written, however, to color thought, scientific and philosophic, for centuries.

Bacon was a pioneer in his work, and we can comprehend the significance of his plan of work only when we remember that up to this time Aristotle's works had been the last word in all knowledge. Throughout the Middle Ages the schoolmen referred to Aristotle as “the Master,” and his statements were unquestioned. Bacon's work was, therefore, but another proof that the darkness and tradition of the Middle Ages were gone and that the Renaissance was no mere chimera.

## VI. CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE (1564-1593).

While few really great figures dot the literary horizon since Chaucer's time, yet changes of a most momentous nature have been taking place in the political, social, and religious strata of England. These changes have been briefly discussed, and we are now on the threshold of an epoch famous in history and literature,—the Elizabethan Age.

More and more the democratic spirit of the people had been curbing the haughtiness of the kings. Bloody Mary, after an inglorious reign, had gone down to her grave in disgrace. England again breathed freely. Then Elizabeth ascended the throne amid the resounding acclaim of "Long live Queen Bess," and England entered upon an eventful epoch. Science had been making tremendous strides. New inventions, but a few years before unthought of, became common realities. The Spanish Armada had been destroyed and fresh laurels were added to the cross of St. George. Wonderful explorations were made. It was rumored that across the watery expanse of the mighty Atlantic a vast continent extended, where the people roofed their houses with gold, where all hopes could be fulfilled and all desires gratified;

Ponce De Leon had set out for the fountain of youth, and doubtless would find it. For there perfection reigned. The landscape was made dazzling by the sheen of a myriad gems that hung upon the crystal trees, and there :

“ The Lydian Tiber flows, with gentle current,  
In a land rich in heroes.”<sup>1</sup>

People walked with elastic step ; all seemed drunken with the elixir of life. The air was full of a delicious, unexplored mystery. Perchance the Golden Age, which poets had sung and seers foretold, was here !

It was with such incentives and such stimuli that Christopher Marlowe, greatest of all pre-Shakespearean dramatists, wrote that wonderful blank verse which made him famous, and has been rightfully called “ Marlowe’s mighty line.” His life was brief. A graduate of Cambridge, he early plunged into dissipation and in a drunken brawl was stabbed, ere he was thirty.

But it is not Marlowe’s brief and tragic life that interests us most. Marlowe was the first poet to use blank verse with ease. Other dramatists before him had used it but, endeavoring to adhere

<sup>1</sup> Vergil’s *Aeneid*.

to classic regulations, their works were strained and artificial. But Marlowe took blank verse and with the skill of a master moulded it into the mighty line that was to immortalize him.

Marlowe wrote four plays that are important. His first was *Tamburlaine*. The main figure is Timur the great Mongolian conqueror, and, though he writes in a rather bombastic style, Marlowe vividly depicts the lust of conquest. His third play—*Edward II*—shows the weakness of a king, and has been called the best historical play ever written. His last play—*The Jew of Malta*—is a powerful portraiture of malice and envy. It has been thought to have furnished material for Shakespeare's Shylock. It is his second play—*Dr. Faustus*—that is his masterpiece. The story is brief and familiar to all. Faustus, a German doctor, having exhausted all the various branches of knowledge, and thirsting for more, sells his soul to Lucifer on condition that whatever he (Faustus) asks shall be granted for the space of twenty-four years, at which time Lucifer shall claim his soul. The construction and technique may be a product of Marlowe's genius, but the play itself is a product of the Elizabethan Age. The widening horizon of facts and the burning

thirst for more knowledge is reflected in one of Faustus' soliloquies :

“ Had I as many souls as there be stars,  
I'd give them all for Mephistophilis.  
By him I'll be a great emperor of the world,  
And make a bridge throughout the moving air.”

The lust of knowledge has fastened itself upon Faustus so deeply that everything else seems dwarfed and insignificant. Eternal life, nay heaven itself, seems puny in comparison, and we hear him say to Mephistophilis, who is bewailing the fact that, being a follower of Lucifer, he will never see heaven again :

“ What, is great Mephistophilis so passionate  
For being deprivèd of the joys of heaven ?  
Learn thou of Faustus' manly fortitude,  
And scorn these joys thou never shalt possess.”

When, at his command, Mephistophilis brings Helen of Troy to him, he breaks out in the two most famous lines of the tragedy :

“ Was this the face that launched a thousand ships  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium ? ”

That Marlowe might have eclipsed Shakespeare, had he lived, is universally admitted ; and his tragic death has been much lamented. Critics

agree that the closing lines of *Dr. Faustus* might appropriately have been his own epitaph :

“ Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,  
And burnēd is Apollo’s laurel bough,  
That sometime grew within this learned man.”

## VII. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616).

In the same year that the wielder of the mighty line first opened his eyes to the cares and sorrows of this world, there was born to modest, unassuming parents, at Stratford-on-Avon, in Warwickshire, a child who was destined to be the greatest factor in the shaping of English drama, and that child was William Shakespeare.

Much of Shakespeare’s life is shrouded in obscurity, and the few meager facts can only indirectly be ascertained. His education, so far as school life is concerned, was pitifully inadequate. But Shakespeare learned from another school and from a different master. Roaming about the flower-spangled meadows and almost idyllic landscape of sunny Warwickshire, he early came in touch with Nature, that eldest of teachers. Perhaps he helped his father, a butcher, to eke out the family income. While yet young, he married Anne Hatheway, a woman six years his senior.

He must now strike out for himself. Whether it was because he thought that there was a better opportunity in London, or because he had been discovered poaching deer in the preserve of a neighboring nobleman, is not certain. But at any rate he went to London, which was to the English youth what New York is to the American. There he pluckily determined to win a name for himself. During this period of obscurity he must have been writing plays, for, when we hear of him again, he has made a place for himself among struggling playwrights. And that was no mean achievement. For at that time playwriting was the all-consuming ambition among aspiring authors as short-story writing is now. But Shakespeare steadily rose. He soon either owned or had a leading interest in two theatres,—the Globe and the Black-friars. These yielded him a good income. He was now a man of influence and free to write at will. This was his period of worldly success. For scholars have divided his life into four periods: (1) The period of apprenticeship. He had not yet mastered the art of writing dramas. His characters are inconsistent, his plots not fully developed, and his dialogues painfully long and uninteresting. (2) The period

of worldly success. His plays show more polish and finish. Success is his. He is no longer among the struggling throng, but he has made good. (3) The period of sorrow. Whether it was the loss of a loved one, or the philosophical tossing of a mighty intellect, is not known. But the plays of this period show a breadth of conception and profundity not hitherto manifested. It is during these titanic wrestlings of the mind that he produces his greatest tragedies,—*Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*. It is here that we hear Hamlet, after soliloquizing upon existence, exclaim concerning his faithless mother :

“ O God, a beast that wants discourse or reason  
Would have mourned longer.”<sup>1</sup>

and Macbeth, after the murder of Duncan, tossing about on his bed, with fevered brow, cries out :

“ Methought I heard a voice cry, Sleep no more !  
Macbeth does murder sleep.”<sup>2</sup>

How different indeed from his early apprenticeship when, in the exuberance of youth, he bursts forth :

<sup>1</sup> *Hamlet*.

<sup>2</sup> *Macbeth*.

“O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright !  
Her beauty hangs upon the cheek of night  
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop’s ear ;  
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear !”<sup>1</sup>

Then he had the world before him ; now he had tasted of its disappointments and experienced its shams. But he finally emerges upon (4) the period of peace, when he writes his last four plays.

Shakespeare was not a great poet. He wrote much poetry, but were it not for his plays he would long since be forgotten. Shakespeare was a genius. What is a genius ? Some one has said, “Genius is the faculty of improving.” Shakespeare’s transition from a bungling playwright to a master of tragedy proves him a genius. And it was this genius dramatically applied which made him the greatest playwright since the days of the immortal Sophocles.

Whole libraries have been written on Shakespeare and his plays. They divide themselves naturally into three classes—though this is by no means the order of their composition : (1) Histories, (2) Comedies, and (3) Tragedies.

His historical plays are, perhaps, not so well

<sup>1</sup> *Romeo and Juliet.*

known as compared with the others. But they doubtless were very popular at the time. For Shakespeare lived in a time when Englishmen were very proud of their nationality, and patriotic enthusiasm ran never so high as in the days of Elizabeth. And so while practically all his histories deal with events prior to this, they deal with facts of which every Briton was proud, and we can readily imagine the applause that ensued when they were acted, and so much the more because Shakespeare, with the license of art, boldly disregarded actual facts and made events happen for the best effect. Of these *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI*, *Julius Cæsar*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* may be noted, though the last two are tragedies also.

Only a cursory glance can be given to the comedies, important as they are. It is assumed that these are well known. Who, for instance, has not heard in the *Merchant of Venice* of Shylock and his pound of flesh? and of the noble plea of Portia? And so with the characters of *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *A Comedy of Errors*.

And so with the tragedies. The grief-stricken Hamlet, the ghost, the deceitful mother, the conspiring uncle, the mourning Ophelia, in *Hamlet*; the wavering Macbeth, the aspiring and remorseful Lady Macbeth, the ever present ghost of Banquo, and the innocent Duncan of *Macbeth*; the aged Lear and his daughters in *King Lear*; the passionate Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the equally passionate Othello in *Othello*,—all have become associated with that class of things which we are expected to know as a matter of course. Perhaps the greatest encomium that can be passed upon these plays is that after three and one-half centuries, when the language in which they were written and the costumes in which they were staged have radically changed, they still hold an audience spellbound.

The above mentioned plays are the ones the reader will find most interesting. Of the other plays of secondary importance or doubtful authenticity, we might mention *Coriolanus*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Love's Labor Lost*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *King John*, *Taming of the Shrew*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure For Measure*, *Timon of Athens*, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *Henry VIII* (unfinished). For it must be

remembered that all of Shakespeare's plays are not masterpieces by any means, and many are interesting only to the advanced scholar and then but for tracing the progress of Shakespeare's ability or of furnishing a possible addition to the few meager facts about his life that we possess.

To the uneducated reader, Shakespeare is seldom very interesting. That is but a criterion of his depth. Shakespeare must be read and reread and carefully studied to be appreciated. Excluding the Bible, there are few writers that have contributed so many phrases and maxims to our language. Shakespeare is a great dramatist, because his characters are real living acting personalities, and because his plays show a deep and masterful insight into the intricate psychological recesses of the human mind.

### VIII. FROM ELIZABETH TO CHARLES.

The Renaissance never died out in England to the extent it did in other countries, and the reasons are at once apparent. Here again, the sterling worth of the Anglo-Saxon race stands out in bold relief. Some one has well said that while the Italian humanists studied Greek for the pleasure of reading the classics, the English

studied it for Christ's sake. And there is a great gulf between Boccaccio on the one hand and Erasmus on the other.

Consequently we find that when the tide of the New Learning had reached its maximum, there was not that quick dissipation of humanitarian study and results so apparent on the continent, especially Italy. But there was an application to solid substantial labor. The vision once given must not be lost sight of but must be attained. The joyousness of youth had passed like the foam on the wine, but the sure steadiness of manhood remained. The blithesomeness of the Elizabethan Age merged into the stern seriousness of the Puritan Age, and while the latter overreached itself, the trend was unmistakably upward.

This is best seen in the progress of the drama, and to trace that we pass by RICHARD HOOKER (1554–1600) and his learned discourses on religion, and JOHN DONNE (1573–1631) in the rugged freedom of whose verse lay the germs of future romanticism,—and omit also a host of minor writers.

#### THE PROGRESS OF THE DRAMA

It will be remembered that in Section VI the

origin of the drama was discussed. After the Miracle and Morality Plays had run their course, the art of manufacturing plots was laboriously reinvented step by step. *Ralph Royster Doyster* (Udall) is one of the first that can be called a play. Another is *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (William Stevenson (?)), while *Goboduc* by THOMAS SACKVILLE (1536–1608) and Thomas Norton is a third. These are crude plays ; the humor is often cheap, the scenes bloody and the dialogues inferior. In viewing the evolution of the drama at this period, one is reminded of the youthful taste for bloodshed and quick action that is replaced in later life by a taste for fine points in emotion and technique.

The next distinct advance is *The Spanish Tragedy* by THOMAS KIDD (1557–1596 (?)). This is a play of a very high order. As one eminent critic has said, “It reaches back to *Goboduc* and forward to *King Lear*. *The Spanish Tragedy* may be said to compare favorably with the Shakespearean masterpieces. From now on the history of the drama is glorious but brief, Marlowe and Shakespeare being the high-water mark.

Beginning with BEN JONSON (1573 (?)–1637) a decline is apparent. Upon Jonson's varied and stormy life we need not dwell. Suffice it to say

that he was a man of great force of character and profoundly learned. He used all his character and learning to force the drama back to classic lines and elevate it, and—failed, just as signally as modern playwrights and stage managers who attempt the same thing fail. Although Jonson failed, his efforts were successful for a while. But the degeneracy of the drama could not—as now—be stemmed.

The masques which Jonson wrote won him royal favor and he was made poet laureate. His principal plays are *Every Man in His Humor*, *Cynthia's Revels*, *Volpone*, *The Alchemist* and *The Silent Woman*.

Among the host of lesser contemporaries may be noted PHILIP MASSINGER (1584–1640), who produced *The Virgin Martyr*, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, *The Grand Duke of Florence*, and *The Maid of Honor*, and BEAUMONT (1584–1616) and FLETCHER (1597–1625). These latter two are always associated together. But brilliant as isolated plays might be, the glory of the drama had departed, and the succeeding years have, as yet, failed utterly to produce a Marlowe or a Shakespeare.

Such, in brief, has been the course of the

drama. A new order of things had arisen when the Puritan dominated England, and we pause to turn to the study of its greatest literary exponent, Milton.

#### IX. JOHN MILTON (1608-1674).

After centuries of indifference, the world is at last beginning to pay respectful homage to the mighty genius of the blind poet. Up to this time, Milton was the greatest man of letters England had produced, and in many respects he was the greatest genius she ever produced. Shakespeare stands without a peer in one field—the drama. But for breadth of conception, for grandeur of expression, for wealth of imagery, and for sublimity of imagination, Milton by far eclipsed the bard of the Avon.

Milton was born of well-to-do parents and from childhood was destined to letters as a profession. After graduating from Christ College, Cambridge, he spent six years in studious retirement at Horton. Part of Milton's personality was here revealed. Six years, with no inclination to follow but his own, would have ruined the majority of young men. To Milton it was but the means of making his knowledge more exhaustive. It was during

this time that *L'Allegro* (The Mirthful Man) and *Il Penseroso* (The Melancholy Man) were composed. A short time afterward he produced the masque, *Comus*.

But it is his next work—*Lycidas*—that stamps him great. Had he never written anything more he would have been a great poet. For *Lycidas* is one of the three great elegies of the English language. The occasion was the death, by drowning, of a learned friend of his. The poet causes all nature to mourn, even the spirits of the earth, and the result is sublime. For as Milton's ability was great, his grief was deep. And indeed as we read the grief-laden lines of *Lycidas* we feel ourselves coming in touch with what seems more than human. But Milton sees the rainbow through the storm and after the first wave of grief rolls by, he, far from being prostrated, tells the shepherds to weep no more.

“ For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,  
Sunk tho' he be beneath the watery floor ;  
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,  
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,  
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore  
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Lycidas.*

Milton was still a young man, and to complete his education he left England to travel. But a long brewing civil war at length burst out, and he hurried home to aid his country. Milton aided the Puritan cause by his pen, and for twenty years literature was deprived of her greatest genius. With full knowledge of the result, Milton wrote his famous *Defensio* and so lost his eyesight.

With the death of Cromwell and the consequent downfall of the Puritan cause, Milton was forced into obscurity. Then, in total darkness, worried with domestic troubles, and with the cause for which he had almost given his life shattered, Milton began to dictate the immortal lines of *Paradise Lost*.

*Paradise Lost* was not the result of a passing whim. It was a steadfast and determined attempt to

“. . . assert eternal Providence  
And justify the ways of God to men.”<sup>1</sup>

Milton was fully aware of the greatness of his task. Since early youth he had felt that he must give the world a great epic. The fitting time had come now and the purpose that had clung to him

<sup>1</sup> *Paradise Lost*.

throughout life begins to find expression. Conscious of the great responsibility, and knowing his own weakness, he addresses the Almighty in one of the most beautiful invocations in all poetry :

“ And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples, th’ upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know’st ; thou from the first  
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread,  
Dove-like, sat’st brooding on the vast abyss,  
And mad’st it pregnant.”

*Paradise Lost*, telling the story of Satan’s revolt in heaven and man’s fall on earth, is one of the greatest epics in all literature. Since the time that Milton wrote it, it has colored all succeeding theology. Our ideas of the beauty of heaven and the terrors of hell are indirectly derived from Milton. His conception was as original as great. In describing the absolute beauty and perfection of the Paradise of our first parents, he gives us that figure, famous in literature—the thornless rose. In picturing the utter desolation and dreariness of hell, he tells us that there was

“ . . . . no light, but rather darkness visible.”

*Paradise Lost* was followed by *Paradise Regained* which, although a great work, does not

compare with the former. It is a paraphrase of those chapters of Matthew dealing with the temptation of Christ. And while an inferior work, as compared with *Paradise Lost*, its stately poise reminds us constantly of the latter.

The *Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* was composed while he was yet in college. It is a fine poem and its rhyme and meter are to be especially commended. The opening lines are famous :

“ It was the winter wild  
While the heaven-born child  
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies ;  
Nature, in awe to Him,  
Had doffed her gaudy trim,  
With her great master so to sympathize.”

His other important work, besides numerous short poems, sonnets, masques, Latin poems, etc., is *Samson Agonistes*, a play, and educational treatises.

Perhaps in this practical age we are prone to forget not only the greatness of his literary achievements, but also his service to his country. This latter meant a great sacrifice, for it was while writing his famous *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* that he lost his eyesight, as we have seen above,

and when the second Charles returned in triumph, his very life was in danger, and only his age and blindness saved him. Like Columbus, who discovered a hemisphere and came home in chains, Milton, author of some of the greatest works in the English language, went down to the grave in loneliness and neglect.

Did he ever become impatient? We have a beautiful allusion to it in a little poem *On His Blindness*.

“ ‘ Doth God exact day-labor, light denied ? ’  
I fondly ask. But Patience to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies, ‘ God doth not need  
Either man’s work or his own gifts.

\* \* \* \* \*

They also serve who only stand and wait.’ ”

If the reader, for the first time reading Milton, finds him uninteresting, let him remember that “an appreciation of Milton is the last reward of consummated scholarship.” For if *Lycidas* marked him great, *Paradise Lost* proclaimed him greatest.

## X. JOHN BUNYAN (1628-1688).

No sketch of English literature, however brief,

would be complete without mention of this most singular personage, John Bunyan.

Born in humble circumstances, he outwardly exhibited nothing that could brand him as unusual. As the son of a tinker he bade fair to live the life of any poor man's son. But while the outside was placid, it was that which was within that made the name of Bunyan a household word at every English hearthstone.

Bunyan was what the world calls fanatic and queer. There never yet was a man possessed of honest, conscientious scruples and who had difficulty in placating them, that the world has not thus designated. Bunyan was such a one. Waterloo may have been a great battle, but deep within his man's heart and soul, battles were fought and victories were won that make such martial glory seem barren folly.

He literally wrestled "not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers" of the unseen world. Bunyan was spiritual—intensely so. Spirituality was scattered and diffused throughout his whole life; it permeated every atom of his being. The physical world, the transient things of life, were to him a farce and a mockery to be ignored and forgotten. His mind was great enough to

grasp the fact that the shadowy physical rested entirely upon the eternal spiritual. His heart "panted after the waterbrooks" of Divine understanding, and he drank deep draughts from the fountains of Divine consolation.

In this he differed from Milton. Milton, with means, intellectuality, learning, and all things that pertain to a polished man of letters, strove to "justify the ways of God to men," and to disentangle the knotty problems of philosophical theology. His was a great mind. He dealt with lofty questions. But his appeal is lost—utterly lost—upon any but trained and cultured intellects.

Now contrast Bunyan. Born in poverty, with no social standing, deprived of an education, torn with conflicting doubts within, and persecuted by enemies without,—he faced the world with only his genius, his Bible, and the enforced leisure of thirteen years of confinement in jail. It was not for him to deal with the fine points of theology nor to delve into the abstract, metaphysical questions of existence. No. All his might and genius were concentrated to answer that greatest of all questions, "What must I do to be saved?" He sought that which thinking men of every race

and every clime have sought. Gautama, meditating in the spice-scented jungles of India, prayed for it; the Mongol Confucius searched out all learning for it; the brow of the great Aristotle became wrinkled as he strove for it; the poet Virgil sang of its coming in the future; Diocletian gave up his crown for it; the fiery Savonarola held the vast Florentine populace spellbound because of it. What is it? Peace.

The very titles of Bunyan's works are an index to the subject matter. His four books are *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, *The Holy War*, *Pilgrim's Progress*.

*Pilgrim's Progress* is his masterpiece. There is perhaps no book, except the English Bible, that can boast of a circulation equal to that of *Pilgrim's Progress*. The style is simple, terse and sincere, about eighty-five per cent. of the words being Anglo-Saxon. It is a work of a common man for common people, and the world, hardened, sin-curst and thoughtless, has nevertheless placed its seal of approval upon the life and works of John Bunyan.

## CHAPTER III

### PERIOD OF FRENCH INFLUENCE

#### XI. JOHN DRYDEN (1631-1700).

THE appearance of Dryden in the literary arena of England ushers in a new era in literature,—the classic age. Before we consider Dryden, a few words about classicism may not be out of place.

Without doubt the political situation of England at that time had much to do with the advent of the classic school. The Puritans, under Cromwell, had been in power. Cold, stern, relentless, they discountenanced any outward manifestation of pleasure. The theaters were closed, the exhibition of joy was frowned upon, pain was borne with stoical indifference—in short, the expression of emotion of any kind was crushed and stifled. In their efforts to suppress sin they stunted human personality. The result was that after Cromwell died and the royal line of kings was restored, England reaped the legitimate fruits of Puritanic

rigidness. Just as a pendulum, when released, swings in the opposite direction, so England lurched from the path of austere righteousness to the broad highway of loose morality. The theaters and all places of amusement were reopened and men reveled in the luxury of unrestrained license.

To this period belongs SAMUEL BUTLER (1612–1680), whose *Hudibras* was the preferred reading of Charles II. *Hudibras* is nothing else than a great lampoon, and hardly rises to the dignity of a satire. But it is a forerunner of the masterful works of satire by Dryden and Pope. This also is the epoch of JOHN LOCKE (1632–1704), whose *Essay concerning Human Understanding* startled the philosophic world and kept it in an uproar for centuries.

In short it was an age of loose morals and keen scientific and philosophic inquiry, and the result is what we would expect,—a stilted and too often immoral literature. This stilted literature we call “classic.” Classicism is a form of literature in which the emotions are suppressed and the form is exalted over the subject matter. The poetry is cold, lifeless and artificial. Town and city life is discussed in preference to the country, and wit, satire and burlesque are the favorite

themes. The heroic couplet was the verse-form generally used.

John Dryden was the first great exponent of the classic school. And in common with all classicists he substituted form for emotion and rhetoric for genuine feeling. In the strict sense of the word, Dryden was not a poet but a literary workman. As such, however, he deserves full credit.

His character lacked many things. Desperate efforts have been made to explain his many inconsistencies, but when all things are said, we must still call Dryden a time-server and a moral weakling. He wrote a flattering poem about Cromwell and a short time afterward, when Charles II returned, he wrote an equally flattering poem to that fickle sovereign. Until he was fifty years old, he devoted his time and talents almost exclusively to writing the immoral plays of the period, simply to receive the pecuniary profits. All this he himself shamefacedly admits. Then when William and Mary ascended the throne, and he lost the laureateship, he began to devote his splendid genius to work of a nobler cast.

Dryden's powers are best seen in his satires. He is the greatest satirist in the English language.

His satire is pitiless and withering and comes down on the unfortunate like an avalanche. It is literally an instance of "woe to him by whom the offense cometh." Becoming offended at his printer for some reason, he described him as a man

"Whose noisome breath still taints the ambient air;  
With leering looks, full-faced and freckled fair,  
With two left legs and Judas-colored hair."

His first and one of his best satires was *Absalom and Achitophel*. It was directed against the Earl of Shaftesbury (Achitophel) and the Duke of Monmouth (Absalom), both Protestants, who had been detected in treasonable doings at the time of the so-called "Popish Plot," when feeling ran high between Catholics and Protestants relative to the creed of their next king. The satire appeared seven days before the trial of Shaftesbury. The groundwork of the satire is the occasion, in Israel, when Absalom revolted against his father, King David, and attempted to secure the throne. State dignitaries are treated in the guise of Jews of the time of David. Needless to say, the poem caused a stir.

His other principal works are *Mac Flecknoe* (a satire directed against a second rate poet named

Shadwell, a contemporary of Dryden), *The Hind and the Panther*, a poem discussing Catholicism and Protestantism (Dryden had again turned Catholic,—he changed his creed no less than three times), *Annus Mirabilis*, and such well-known short poems as *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, *Alexander's Feast*; or *The Power of Music*, and such plays as *All for Love*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, etc.

## XII. ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744).

Space forbids more than a passing mention of the second great writer of the classic school. What has been said about the style and diction of Dryden's writings applies, on the whole, to Pope. His works are flawless so far as form and technique are concerned, but utterly wanting as to the qualities that make true poetry.

Pope was a very precocious child. At a time when religious feeling was intense, he, being a Catholic, was ostracized from the best society and received but scanty education. He is another example of a great mind in an unsound body. With the exception of the Bible and Shakespeare, no other writer has enriched our language with so many terse and witty proverbs. We note a few :

“A little learning is a dangerous thing,  
Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“For fools rush in where angels fear to tread.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“To err is human, to forgive, divine.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen, etc.”<sup>1</sup>

“Not what you say but how you say it” might be taken as the constant motto of Pope in common with all classicists. It was not the material but the polish, that bore weight.

His *Essay on Criticism* has long since been regarded as classic; it sprang into immediate favor when it was produced and has ever since been studied as an example of how well and with what interest trite and indifferent things could be restated. There is nothing strictly original about it, for Pope merely collected all the old proverbs on composition, and others to illustrate his points, and forced them into the artificial singsong of the heroic couplet. And it must be confessed that, from the standpoint of workmanship, the pro-

<sup>1</sup> *Essay on Criticism.*

duction is a work of art. One has only to read to find the source of scores of every-day sayings.

In the *Rape of the Lock* Pope reached the climax of the mock epic. The circumstances attendant upon its production are amusing. A young gallant having become enamored of a court beauty, succeeded in cutting off a lock of the beauty's hair and making good his escape. The episode threatened to become serious and Pope was appealed to to write something to repair the breach. The result was the *Rape of the Lock*. Every little incident of the day is spoken of as if it were a momentous affair and the result was all that could be desired, both to the estranged parties and to all those who, then or since, have loved a huge joke.

Pope is also famous for his translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These are very free translations, being practically paraphrases. A noted critic of the time summed everything up when he said, "A good work, Pope, but don't call it Homer."

His other works are, *Dunciad* (satire), *Essay on Man* (philosophical), and the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (satire).

## XIII. THE RISE OF THE NOVEL.

English thought did not manifest itself alone in the emotionless literature known as classicism, it sought another outlet—prose, and it is this that we wish to discuss.

There were many reasons why English prose should suddenly become important.

There was a growing percentage of people who could read and write; there was a greater freedom for the press; there was an increased wealth per capita, occasioned by England's growing commerce, and again, the political situation was such that pamphleteers were in great demand, so that the struggling author need not lack financial help if his party sympathies were right. Then, too, we must not omit the influence of the coffee-houses. And what were the coffee-houses? They were respectable loafing places. A coffee-house was not as exclusive or as expensive as a modern club. Here the Londoner could write his letters, meet his friends and in short discuss and hear discussed all the news of the day.

It was with influences like these at work that Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729) founded his famous thrice-a-week paper, *The Tatler*. *The Tatler* was but a single folio sheet, and contained, beside the

usual bits of news social and political, an essay on the follies of the times. The success of *The Tatler* was immediate. Queen Anne read it at her breakfast table and it was more popular at the coffee-houses than all the other papers combined.

After about a year it was discontinued only to give way to a still more popular paper, *The Spectator*. This was published every day except Sunday and it is this paper that brings the name of Joseph Addison (1672-1719) into prominence. Addison has been called the most charming of English prose-writers. He did the same thing for eighteenth century England that Chaucer did for the fourteenth and Shakespeare the sixteenth,—he mirrored the people and the times. It was in *The Spectator* that the famous *Sir Roger De Coverley Papers* appeared. Addison's style was and is famous for its polish and refinement.

But the reader is inclined to ask what have the writings of Steele and Addison to do with the novel?

From time immemorial the world has been ready to listen to a story. In very ancient times these stories were written in the form of great epic poems, as the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, where some demi-god or hero was the main character. In

mediæval times these stories took the form of fairy tales, or stories with the improbable element so large that we with difficulty see the flesh and blood of reality. Chaucer set himself squarely against all this. Still, for hundreds of years after Chaucer's time, the fiction read by the average Englishman was mainly composed of stories in which green dragons and fire-breathing monsters fought with model knights that were armed with magic shields or invincible swords. But in the subject matter and diction of *The Tatler* and *Spectator*, all this is changed. We have English common life discussed in good sound prose. Yet the writings of Steele and Addison were not novels in any sense of the word. While they discussed human nature, they did not do so through the medium of a story.

The next link in the chain is none other than Daniel DeFoe (1659-1731), author of the famous *Robinson Crusoe*. In *Robinson Crusoe* we have a character that is preëminently human. He is beset with obstacles which he overcomes in a logical way and without the aid of magic belts or fairy attendants. *Robinson Crusoe* is a tremendous step in the development of the novel. But *Robinson Crusoe* is the story of an adventure, and is not yet a novel in the correct sense of the word.

One more step was needed, and that step was taken by Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) when he gave to the world his *Pamela* and *Clarissa Harlowe* and by Henry Fielding (1707-1754) when he produced *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*. The English novel is now complete; it is a story minus the magic element and that story is here used, not as in *Robinson Crusoe* to tell the adventures of a character in some far-off clime, but to tell the story of human nature in the home and in the city. In short to recount the loves, hates and ambitions of human nature.

Henceforth nothing further could be done, save a fuller development of details. The English novel has been invented and it promises to stay as long as men and women shall love and hate each other and as long as the human heart has longings and aspirations.

#### XIV. JONATHAN SWIFT (1667-1745).

Among the great figures that dot the literary horizon none enlists our sympathy more than that of Jonathan Swift, greatest of English prose satirists. For Swift's life was a tragedy, and none realized it more than he. He was born in Dublin, Ireland, and was financially dependent upon his

immediate relatives. Being made secretary to a kinsman of his brother—an event which he should have hailed as good fortune—Swift felt his dependence more than ever. In fact so strange and so queer is his temperament that it can, with difficulty, be explained. Swift had an eternal grudge against life because he imagined that it had a continual spite toward him. He was selfish, ambitious and whimsical. Other men had power, why not he? Other men had wealth and influence, why not he? Forsooth the world and the powers that be had conspired to deprive him of his natural birthright. Therefore the world was his foe and mankind his enemy. So reasoned Swift. And his works may be considered a gigantic sneer at the world and its farces.

At the age of twenty-seven, Swift took orders and entered the Church. Perhaps there never was a greater inconsistency. Not that he failed to perform his duties faithfully or that he was in any way disloyal to the trust imposed upon him. Far from it. He discharged his obligations with scrupulous fidelity. He fought for the Church and defended her rights; he gave liberally to the poor out of his slender income. But in spite of all this Swift's nature was earthly and not heavenly;

he looked downward and not upward. His lust for wealth and power and influence was just as great as ever. He never rose above the material. And yet he had voluntarily bound himself to minister to the spiritual wants of people ; to lift men's eyes above the earthly and transient, and to fix them upon those things that shall endure, when "the very elements shall melt with a fervid heat!"

Until he was thirty years old he had done nothing in the literary world. Then, he suddenly discovered his power. His first work was *The Tale of a Tub*, in which he sneers at the shams in religion. This was followed by *The Battle of Books*, in which he rails at shams of pedantry. But Swift's masterpiece is his *Gulliver's Travels*. This was written soon after the political success he had attained, and he lets his fierce, morbid anger at humanity have full sway.

The book itself is a delightful children's book. From the point of popularity it ranks with *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Robinson Crusoe*. Yet behind the apparent absurdity of things is seen the revengeful, malignant hatred against humanity.

Throughout all of Swift's life—his few successes and his reverses, real or fancied, there is but one bright glimmer, and that is his *Journal to Stella*,

which is nothing more than a collection of letters written to a former pupil of his—Hester Johnson—whom he called his Star (Stella). These letters show an aspect of his life not hitherto made manifest. They were apparently written in his brighter and gayer moments. They are filled with a tenderness and pity not elsewhere found in his works, nor indeed in his whole life.

But one bright spot is all. The closing years of Swift's life go down to a loneliness and despair that is terrible to imagine. Both Stella and the one other girl—Ester Vanhomrigh—that had loved him, and whose love he had slighted, were dead. Nothing remained. And with the shadows of insanity gathering about him he died.

Swift made one great mistake in life. He saw the deceits and hollowness of human existence. But others have seen them as well and made life a success. The difference is that to others they were an incentive to be up and doing; to Swift they were but sources of greater hatred and greater animosity. The tragic life of Jonathan Swift is a lesson to us that the true facts of human existence should not repel us from doing our best to better it, but rather impel us to more earnest endeavors.

## CHAPTER IV

### MODERN PERIOD

#### *The Romantic Movement*

##### XV. DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709-1784).

JUST how much we owe to James Boswell (1740-1795) for the persistency with which he hung about Johnson will never be computed. Suffice it to say that no small amount of the great Doctor's fame rests on the activity of this tireless Scotchman in keeping himself in his company as much as possible and recording in his *Life of Johnson* so many of the brilliant sayings almost as they fell from Johnson's lips.

Dr. Samuel Johnson, the first English lexicographer, and in many respects one of the most interesting men of letters England has yet produced, was the son of a poor Litchfield bookseller. He was sent to Oxford and to other schools, but his education was incomplete on account of a constant lack of funds. Whether it was in the schools to which he was sent, or

whether it was in poring over his father's books at Litchfield, it mattered not. Suffice it to say that Johnson became one of the most erudite men of his age.

At the age of twenty-seven, Samuel Johnson left his paternal roof and went to London, with a few literary productions of his own in his pocket, determined to win a name for himself. "Then," as one of his biographers says of him, "for a quarter of a century Johnson fought a hand-to-hand conflict with poverty." He obtained work as hack writer on several papers, but for all that he was poorest of the poor; he was frequently forced to sleep on ash heaps or any sheltered place, having often not even the price of a night's lodging. Then, too, he was afflicted with a contagious skin disease. He also married a widow who proved to be little better off financially than himself. In desperation he opened a private school, but received only a few students. But throughout all, Johnson stuck to London, determined to win out. He had just enough of the old Saxon determination to fight it out to the bitter end. And he did win out. His two satirical poems, *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* brought him into recognition. The

leading booksellers then hired him to compile the *Dictionary of the English Language*, for £1,575, which he finished in 1755. But it was not till seven years later, when George III gave him a life pension of £300, that Johnson was really independent. For just a short time before he was compelled to write *Rasselas*, another of his great works, to defray the expenses of his mother's funeral. Later he produced another famous work, *Lives of the Poets*—but from now on he was great more on account of his great personality, his wonderful flow of conversation, and his acknowledged powers as literary lawgiver, than because of any further work that he produced.

Johnson was the last exponent of the old classic school. He was a classicist to the very core. The peaceful quiet of the country, the wonders of nature, the expression of emotion,—all these had no charm for him. Nay, more, he had a positive repugnance for them, and so he threw all his power against the rising wave of Romanticism, and for a time stemmed it. But forces were just now at work in the social and moral fabric of England against which Johnson might vainly hurl himself. There was an awakening and an expand-

ing which differed from the Elizabethan age, only because it was greater. The era of lax morals was being supplanted by a wave of respectability. Vice durst no longer stalk openly through the streets. The cold, formal, lifeless church services, with their abstract, emotionless dissertations on the fine points of theology, were being superseded by the earnest democratic preaching of such men as Wesley. From a religious standpoint this age is famous for the rise of Methodism. The law that sent a man to the block for stealing a few shillings was struck out. Such men as John Howard had been devoting themselves to the reform of prisons, and as a result the jails, which had been reeking with filth, became more humane places of detention. England too was spreading out politically. Wolfe's victory over Montcalm gave her the supremacy of the New World, and Clive, by his conquests, had made England mistress of India, the land sacred to Brahma and Buddha.

Men had grown weary of cold, unfeeling literature that dealt only with wit and satire, and had begun to write in a vein that gave freer rein to the emotions. They turned from the brick and cobblestone of the city with its artificial life, and

called on nature, "eldest of things," to teach them lessons for the heart, and not for the intellect. In short, England was again in the travail of a new birth that should give life and impetus to the great authors of the modern age which should win for England her unquestioned supremacy in the world of letters.

## XVI. THOMAS GREY (1716-1771).

To the great mass of readers, Thomas Grey is kept in memory because of his famous *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. To students of English literature he is kept in mind for the added reason that he was one of the earlier Romanticists, and because his *Elegy* was the first great romantic poem.

Let us in a few words examine Romanticism. We might briefly define romantic poetry by saying that it is the opposite of classic poetry. It exalted thought above form. It was continually seeking after new ideas and new verse-forms. The romantic movement is often known as the "return to nature" movement, because, instead of selecting city life and city scenes as the classicists did, the romantic poets turned to the country and began to portray the endless beauties of the natural world about us.

Thomas Grey was not the first poet of the romantic movement. Like all other epochs, the roots of one lie deep in the other. And so the beginnings of Romanticism were deeply hidden in the artificial sub-soil of classicism. JAMES THOMSON (1700-1748) had published a poem, *The Seasons*, of a decidedly romantic nature. He was soon followed by WILLIAM COLLINS (1721-1759) whose Odes show that Romanticism is very near at hand. His Odes show a delicate fineness of thought and expression that is unlooked for at this time. Of these his *Ode to Evening* has become classic and is by many considered the finest in the language. But it was left for JAMES MACPHERSON (1736-1796) to introduce the romantic in a novel manner. He pretended to have found a number of manuscripts of the poet Ossian written in the Gaelic language, and that the productions he published were but translations. Although it is now almost an assured fact that the "translations" were his own works and that there never were any "manuscripts," his success was complete, and his epics *Fingal* and *Temora*, and the other *Poems of Ossian* were hailed with acclaim. It is at least certain that they have about them vigor truly characteristic of the Highlands.

Other pioneers there were, as THOMAS CHATERTON (1752-1880) and GEORGE CRABBE (1757-1827), but when, in 1751, Grey gave to the world his wonderful *Elegy*, he not only established his own reputation, but he forever proved that Romanticism was a school of writing destined to endure. His *Elegy* has perhaps been translated into more languages than any other poem. It has been admired the world over. The reason is that Grey has written in a way and about a subject that appeals to us all. He takes us out in the calm, peaceful country, where

“ The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea.”

And lets us hear

“ The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,  
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,  
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn.”

And tells us a truth that throughout all these years has been smiting the hearts of the self-satisfied and complacent, like the handwriting on the wall.

“ The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Await like th' inevitable hour,—  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

In addition to his *Elegy*, Grey wrote very little. Several odes, and *The Progress of Poesy*, which yet shows the classic influence, may be said to comprise his literary efforts. The *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* has won a place for itself in the hearts of the people which few other poems have, and by many critics has been accorded the same high plane that the three greatest elegies in the English language occupy—Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelley's *Adonais*, and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.

## XVII. OLIVER GOLDSMITH (1728-1774).

Oliver Goldsmith, like Grey and Cowper, was a pioneer in the new order of things—the romantic era. And the works of each of these three still show the influences of classicism. Yet this influence was but natural. It was hard for struggling authors to gain a hearing, let alone a subsistence, when they wrote in a style and along lines which such literary giants as Dr. Johnson condemned and determined to crush. The result was that there was an attempt to “serve God and mammon.”

Goldsmith, when a young man, went to college as “sizar,” *i. e.*, one who is part menial and part student, being compelled thus to earn his educa-

tion. After his graduation he returned home, having developed a fondness for flute-playing and good clothes. He later took a trip on the continent, apparently undisturbed by the one thought which was worrying his friends, namely, what he should do as a life's work. For a time he studied medicine, but later became hack-writer for a living, and between intervals of his work he produced the works that made him famous. Of these, two are worthy of mention, *The Vicar of Wakefield*, a prose narrative, and *The Deserted Village*, a most interesting poetic work.

As a man he lacked strength of character, but he was withal of a generous nature. He died owing thousands of pounds, much of which had been given to the poor. As a writer he has a charm peculiarly his own, and we must search far and wide to find finer descriptions of nature and portraiture of character than are found in either *The Vicar of Wakefield*, or *The Deserted Village*.

### XVIII. WILLIAM COWPER (1731-1800).

While not ranking as one of the greatest poets in English literature, yet, being of the pioneers of the romantic movement, and a writer of some of our well-known hymns, he deserves mention.

William Cowper was born in Great Berkhamstead, a town in Hertfordshire, of an old and honored family. His father, a minister, was too preoccupied with other affairs to pay much attention to his son. His mother was his companion and chum, and when she died, while he was but six years old, his troubles began and were only ended by death. Possessed of a shrinking, retiring and ultra-sensitive nature, his contact with humanity was a source of constant misery. Gazing at his mother's picture, in after years, he could write with all the sorrow of a sorrow-filled heart :

“ Oh, that those lips had language !  
Life has passed  
But roughly since I heard them last.”<sup>1</sup>

At eighteen he left school and began to study law for which he had little aptitude. He wrote occasionally for magazines, and lived an apparently aimless existence. But his sensitive nature had begun to undergo a change and he began to give way to periods of depression. At the age of thirty-two he was—by the influence of his uncle—given the opportunity of obtaining a good government position, which position was to be ob-

<sup>1</sup> *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture.*

tained only by passing an examination. Although this examination was often a farce, yet Cowper worried about it night and day, and at length his high-strung nature gave way, and his mind became unbalanced.

After being an inmate of an asylum for two years, he was released, and the rest of his life was spent in the family of Rev. and Mrs. Unwin. With the opportunity of his life gone, he was, as he tells us in *The Castaway*,

“Washed headlong from on board,  
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,  
His floating home forever left.”

Here in the quiet home of the Unwins, secluded from the din and confusion of the great, outside world, Cowper lived in peace, and employed himself with carpentering, gardening, and in ministering to the sick. He seemed to have become contented with his lot, for he tells us in *England* that

“To shake thy senate, and from heights sublime  
Of patriot eloquence to flash down fire  
Upon thy foes, was never meant my task.”

But while Cowper was content as far as earthly ambition was concerned, his mind was racked with

thoughts of the world to come. There is much in this phase of Cowper's life to remind us of Bunyan. For after his fit of insanity Cowper's mind was never strong. Indeed it was upon the eve of his second period of insanity that he wrote that well-known hymn beginning :

“ God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform ;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.” <sup>1</sup>

And as the years wore on, he became filled with the idea that he was doomed to eternal punishment. And so in mental agony that is terrible to conceive, he struggled on. There is this difference between Bunyan and Cowper. Bunyan in his spiritual wrestling was fighting a winning battle, whilst Cowper was waging a losing warfare, and with a loneliness that is awful to imagine, he went down to a despairing grave. The closing line of *The Castaway*, written in his last years, might have been autobiographical for the vivid and realistic picture it gives :

“ No voice divine the storm allayed,  
No light propitious shone ;  
When snatched from all effectual aid,

<sup>1</sup> *Olney Hymns.*

We perish, each alone :  
But I beneath a rougher sea,  
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he."

With the exception of *The Task*, Cowper wrote only short poems. In addition to the ones already noted, we might mention *Yardly Oak*, *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture*, *The Nightingale and the Glowworm*, *The Winter Evening*. He also made some translations. Only once in his works does he forget himself and write in a light vein, and that was when he penned *The Diverting History of John Gilpin*, which has never failed to amuse.

As was said before, he was the author of many hymns. Indeed he first began to write hymns at the suggestion of a friend, to divert his thoughts from melancholy. But who shall presume to estimate the cry that went up from the heart that knew itself to be slipping into an abyss, when he wrote the immortal lines :

" Oh, for a closer walk with God,  
A calm and heavenly frame ;  
A light to shine upon the road  
That leads me to the Lamb!"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Olney Hymns.*

## XIX. ROBERT BURNS (1759-1796).

About the middle of the eighteenth century there was born in Ayrshire, Scotland, of poor parents, a child that was in after years destined to play upon the heart-strings of the English speaking people as few other poets have been able to do. His life was a tragedy and that simple fact, more than anything else, accounts for the passionate beauty of his poetry. We are here reminded of a wonderful painter who, being complimented upon the rare beauty of his productions, replied, "Yes, but I have ground up my wife and children to make the colors!" And so while the impassioned verses of Burns thrill us as seldom poetry does, we must remember that it was produced by a life blighted with disappointment, sorrow, and sin.

Burns' opportunity for education was decidedly small. He often ate with a book of ballads before him, and these he whistled and sang as he did the heavy, unmitigating toil of the farm. After his father died, his brother and sister and himself rented the farm. But the venture was unprofitable. Affairs were such, financially, that he decided to go to Jamaica, and it was to defray the expenses of the trip that he published his first

volume of poems. This, however, excited so much attention, that he suddenly found himself famous, and he decided to remain at home. He leased a farm in Dumfriesshire and married Jean Armour, and for a few short years lived a really happy life. Soon afterward he was made excise-man (assessor of taxes) of his district, and this position increased the temptation to drink. From then on till the end of his short career, his life was a succession of drinking bouts with intervals of remorse and attempted reformation. Throughout it all he continued to write, but his life was cut short by his intemperance and he died in his thirty-seventh year. Like the tragic career of Marlowe, another life, pregnant with the greatest possibilities, was cut short ; and sorrow and despair reigned where hope and joy might have had full sway.

Burns was a common man. He had the hopes, the ideas, the emotions of a common man. Hence his poetry appeals to the common people as well as to the educated. Its very rusticity is attractive. For Burns was in nowise influenced by the classic ideas. Of the polished lore of book knowledge he knew nothing. And so when he wrote it was with a sigh of relief that we find him blissfully

ignorant of the raven, the lark, and other hackneyed classic terms, but very much alive to the timorous partridges and the "milk-white thorn" of his Ayrshire farm. He noticed even the modest mountain daisy, and when his plowshare turned it over he regarded its destruction ruefully:

" Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower,  
Thou's met me in an evil hour ;  
For I must crush among the stoure (dust)  
Thy slender stem.  
To spare thee now is past my power  
Thou bonnie gem." <sup>1</sup>

And when on a bleak November day he plows up a mouse's nest, he is reminded of his own hard struggle to wring a sustenance from the none too fertile fields, and when he remembers that the mouse likewise

" . . . saw the fields laid bare and waste,  
And weary winter comin' fast."

And had striven to provide for that time, only to have all her care and preparations rudely demolished, and he begins to apologize, and to wonder

<sup>1</sup> *To a Mountain Daisy.*

if, after all, such things happen only to mice. As he reviews his own brief life, crowned with great disappointments, he is forced to say :

“ But, mousie, thou art no thy lane (alone)  
In proving foresight may be vain ;  
The best laid schemes o’ mice an’ men  
Gang aft a-gley (awry)  
An’ lea’e us nought but grief an’ pain,  
For promised joy.”<sup>1</sup>

*The Cotter’s Saturday Night* is one of Burns’ longest poems. It is a most complete portraiture of the simple, unassuming life of the Scottish peasant. It is Saturday night, the week’s work is done, and the members of the family come in from their various places of labor. All sit about the fire. There comes a knock at the door, and they open it to receive a neighbor boy who is come, presumably, on some errand. But the mother with the quick intuition of a woman perceives the heightened color in Jenney’s face and the bashfulness of the young man, and guesses the reason. They invite him to stay for supper and to share in the after worship. And Burns, whose heart, capable of such great love, had

*To a Mouse.*

been filled with so much sorrow, cannot refrain from stopping in the tale and looking upon the peaceful scene his genius has painted, to exclaim :

“ Oh, happy love ! where love like this is found !  
Oh, heart-felt raptures ! bliss beyond compare !  
From scenes like this old Scotia’s grandeur springs,  
That makes her loved at home, reverenced abroad.”

Burns’ poetry is not what the world calls optimistic. Nor indeed may some of the greatest literary masterpieces be so called. But his poetry is true—true to nature, true to life. Whatever might have been the faults of Robert Burns, falsehood was not one of them. He looked truth fairly in the face and he wrote the facts about his life and the life of others as they were and not as they should have been. His life was filled with woe and crowned with despair, and he knew it. And with the unflinching courage of a hero he tells us about it. And so we feel that we are looking into the sacred chambers of his heart when he tells us how :

“ Aft hae I rov’d by bonnie Doon  
To see the woodbine twine,  
And ilka (every) bird sang o’ its lufe (love)  
And sae did I o’ mine.

“ Wi’ lightsome heart I pu’d a rose,  
Frae aff its thorny tree ;  
And my fause luver (lover) stow (stole) my rose  
But left the thorn wi’ me.”<sup>1</sup>

Burns wrote mostly in his native dialect which has a rugged beauty all its own. He produced no great works, but his short poems, ballads, songs, etc., are wonderful for their beauty, freshness, and sincerity. Many of his poems need only to be mentioned to be at once recognized, such as *Auld Lang Syne*, *John Anderson my jo, John*, *Flow Gently Sweet Afton*, *Highland Mary*, *To Mary in Heaven*, *The Banks O’ Doon*, *O Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast*; his poems *To a Mouse*, *To a Louse*, contain a wealth of common sense philosophy. He made Scotland laugh by such poems as *Tam O’ Shanter’s Ride*, and made her realize her importance and sturdy dignity by such poems as *Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled*, and *A Man’s a Man for A’ That*.

His philosophy of life is concisely stated in one of the noblest of his shorter poems, *Man Was Made to Mourn*. And whether we choose to accept that as true or false, and whether we choose to regard things as they are or as they should be, let

<sup>1</sup> *The Banks O’ Doon.*

us remember that the philosophy, that man was created to mourn, was the final verdict of a man, neither saint nor friend, to whom much had been promised and little given ; who had been permitted to sip the cup of fame, honor, and joy, and had been compelled to drain the beaker of sorrow ; who had fought a life and death struggle with poverty, temptation and sin, and lost !

## XX. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1771-1850).

We have before us for our consideration the life and character of a man who holds an honored place in the English world of letters, and who is entirely different from any character we have so far studied. He has genius, but it was not the genius of Shakespeare ; his lines have force, but it is not the "mighty line" force or masculine vigor of Marlowe ; he has great thoughts, but they have not the awe-inspiring sublimity of Milton ; he is not rocked with spiritual conflicts like Bunyan or untamed and restless like Byron. In short, his life is serene and quiet, and he wins his fame along avenues not heretofore discovered. For Wordsworth was a nature poet. He is the greatest nature poet in the English language. He loved, exalted, and idolized nature in a way

that is strictly *sui generis*. And it is in Wordsworth's love of nature that the key to the appreciation of his poetry lies.

Nature, to Wordsworth, was a sentient personality. It was something that lived, in a vague, vast and mysterious manner, and through which pulsated the throbbing wavelets of feeling. He was more than merely in love with nature, he was enamored. He could sit for hours, aye, all day, with no one to disturb him, mute and spellbound by that wonderful incomprehensible something that occupied the material world about him. In *Lines Composed near Tintern Abbey* he tells us that:

"The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion : the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colors and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite.

\* \* \* \* \*

Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains ; and all that we behold  
From this green earth."

In fact Wordsworth's adoration of nature bordered closely upon absolute idolatry. Never was heathen devotee filled with greater ecstasy than

Wordsworth when in communion with the awful and mysterious THAT, which he worshipped. In *Peter Bell* he speaks, in the tones of one who is witnessing an act of sacrilege, about those who are not moved by nature. Peter Bell, one of the characters, comes to the river bank and sees there a primrose, but :

“ A primrose by the water's brim,  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more ! ”

And yet Wordsworth, thorough nature student that he was, is woefully incomplete, and that in the very places where it would be least expected. But the fact is that the very greatness of his love caused him to overlook certain truths, harsh and cold, but truths, nevertheless. In nature he recognized only the beautiful, the peaceful and the good. He pauses, enraptured, to look upon the matchless beauty of a rainbow until time is forgotten, but he fails to remember the terrible storm that preceded it. He meditates all day upon the spotless petals of a rose, but is oblivious to the thorn lurking beneath. He is overawed at the sight of the oak trees and the dense forests, but forgetful of the countless storms

and the ceaseless life and death struggle through which they have passed and are passing before they became giants in their domain. He views with contemplative ecstasy the grandeur of the mountain ranges, but ignores the terrible subterranean convulsions that placed them there. His is an ideal world, ours is a real world. Therefore we shall not be astonished to discover that he is entirely incapable of portraying the human emotions. Nor, indeed, does he attempt it. The higher emotions of love and joy and hate which pulsate through the ethereal lyrics of Shelley are unknown to him. Living in the picturesque lake district in Westmoreland, with his wife and sister Dorothy, a life unclouded with the least shadow of misfortune, devoting his life to poetry and the contemplation of the beautiful, being far removed from those whom stern necessity compels to wage a mortal combat for their very existence, it were strange indeed if he were able to depict the grim scenes of actual life.

Wordsworth was a very voluminous writer. One of his great faults is that he wrote too much and his revisers struck out too little. But in the great host of shorter poems, in addition to his two longest works, *The Excursion* and *Peter Bell*, several

deserve special mention. *Michael* is one of the best of narrative poems. It is a beautiful pastoral, with the scene laid in "Merry Englande." *Lao-damia* is another, deserving special recognition. Its scene is in the mythology of ancient Greece, when man and the gods held converse. It is stately and grand and well worth reading. But the poem that, more than any other, gave him wide recognition, is the well-known *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, which gives forth the novel and fascinating doctrine, as voiced in the fifth stanza :

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;  
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,  
Hath elsewhere had its setting,  
And cometh from afar ! "

Wordsworth is a great poet. He has been called the poet's poet because he was the inspiration of several succeeding romantic poets. His genius though great was limited, and his conception of life from the very nature of the case, incomplete and inexact. But upon the few chords of life's harp, of which he was master, he played with consummate skill.

## CHAPTER V

### MODERN PERIOD

*The Romantic Movement (Continued)*

#### XXI. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834).

COLERIDGE was the poet of the mysterious. His aim is exactly opposite to that of his great contemporary—Wordsworth. We have seen how Wordsworth was enamored with nature. How the sight of the humblest flower would throw him into a rapturous and contemplative spirit. His plan was to make the commonplace, ordinary things about us attractive, while Coleridge delved into the realm of the mysterious and unknown, and sought to bring them to light and make them common.

Concerning the life of Coleridge a few words will suffice. Left an orphan at the tender age of nine, he faced the world and began life. Somehow or other he managed to acquire a good education, but left Cambridge University before taking

a degree, and thereafter in life there were few things he ever completed.

He became an intimate friend of Wordsworth and like him settled down to write poetry in the serene quietness of country life. Coleridge lived near Wordsworth in the beautiful lake district, and these two, and Robert Southey, are called the Lake Poets. Later in life, suffering greatly from neuralgia he used a quack specific, and thereby formed the opium habit. For fifteen years all his energies were consumed in battling against that terrible drug, and at last, with wasted body, he was successful. But a few years afterward he died.

Viewed from the standpoint of amount, Coleridge is not a great poet. Indeed it is in the field of philosophy and criticism that we must go to find the bulk of Coleridge's works. Some one has completely summed it up when he said "All that Coleridge wrote might be bound in twenty pages, but that should be bound in pure gold." One great reason why there is so little is that so much of his writing is fragmentary. He had wonderful genius in inventing plots and getting material ; he probed into the mysterious—his favorite field of action—with the acuteness of a keen psychologist

and metaphysician ; he handled this material and wove it into flawless English—whether poetry or prose—with the finished skill of a master ; but he possessed the fatal habit of putting off till the morrow what should have been accomplished to-day ; and, alas for Coleridge and the lovers of poetry, the morrow never came.

One of his best works, and one of the few that he ever completed, is the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. It is a weird story of how a mariner shot an albatross with an arrow, and how he and his fellow mariners suffered innumerable hardships on that account, and were finally all killed except himself, and how he was doomed to roam over the world and at stated intervals compelled to recite his story. The rhyme and meter are perfect and the subject matter and construction are as beautiful as they are wonderful.

*Christabel* is another of his works that goes back into mediæval times and into the mystery of sorcery for its setting. It shows the same power of construction manifested in the *Ancient Mariner*. *Christabel*, however, is fragmentary. But it is in *Kubla Khan*, another of his fragments, that Coleridge's ability to produce melodious and onomatopœic verse is seen at its best. The circumstances

of its composition are peculiar. Coleridge was reading a book of Marco Polo's, *Travels in the East*, when he fell asleep. In his sleep he seemed to be composing hundreds of lines about the prince of Kubla Khan. Awakening he eagerly seized writing materials and rapidly wrote the lines we still have. Unfortunately he was at this moment interrupted by a friend and called away on urgent business. When he returned a few hours later the power of further writing had entirely left him. He laid it away waiting for the inspiration which never came. Until this day lovers of literature are regretting the interruption which stayed the pen while writing such a wonderful poem. *Kubla Khan* is in many respects the most wonderful poem in the English language. No one can read *Kubla Khan* even casually, without desiring at once to reread it again and again. Although only fifty-four lines long, it has never failed to hold its readers spellbound. The marvelous adaptation of meter to sense, the mysterious ideas, half expressed, half inferred, and the superb rhyme, have a fascination that is all their own. One feels in reading it that its author too

“. . . had fed on honey-dew  
And drank the milk of Paradise ! ”

Coleridge wrote a number of shorter poems and odes in addition to the ones above mentioned. As already intimated, it is rather in the realm of philosophy and criticism that he attained his greatest success. Coleridge is a great man. Not alone for the wonderful things he has written but for the still greater things he might have written, had he not allowed the fatal habit of procrastination to attain such a mastery over himself.

## XXII. SIR WALTER SCOTT (1771-1832).

The life, personality, and writings of Sir Walter Scott are entirely different from those of Wordsworth and Coleridge, his two great contemporaries. He loved nature, but was not a dreamy, meditative devotee like Wordsworth. He loved nature in the hearty, wholesome manner of a person who is heartily enjoying life. Unlike Coleridge, he did not search the occult Orient or delve into the mysterious, forbidden depths of the supernatural for his subject-matter. Instead he chose for his plots, events, and for his characters, people, that might have had an actual existence. Scott was a normal, healthy, wide-awake man, and he writes of people, full of red blood, who live not in dream-land but in the world of actual affairs.

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, of ancestry that represents a mingling of Scotch and English. When eighteen months old he was attacked by a disease which left him lame for life. At the age of seven he was sent to high school at Edinburgh and his education was begun. Tradition still tells how he was often seen, surrounded by a crowd of admiring students, reciting some tale, for Scott was master of the art of story-telling.

But Scott's first attempt at literature was not along this line. He began with translations, and next we find him weaving all the old border romances and stories into interesting and ringing verse. He repeopled the vales of Scotland as in the stirring days of old. We hear the martial pip-broch and the glens are dark with hordes of Highland foragers. There is no trace of classicism here. His verse flows on in narration unhindered by the conventionalities of art. Yet Scott's poetry never violates the simple laws of rhyme or meter. And while he was not as scholarly a poet as others, yet the reader will with difficulty find a word or syllable that has gone astray. One is impressed with the idea that meter and rhyme aid rather than retard the freedom.

It was during this period that he produced his

three greatest poetical works, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion* and *The Lady of the Lake*. But a new favorite now appeared on the poetical horizon of England—none other than the dashing and brilliant Lord Byron. The fickle public forsook Scott, with his poems ringing of the borderland, and turned to applaud and lionize the promising young peer who was startling all Europe with his *Childe Harolde*. When we contrast the characters of Scott and Byron it was almost literally the case of the Jewish mob that surged about the Roman Prætorium crying, “Away with Christ, give us Barabbas.” In many respects, eighteen centuries of civilization have not materially altered human nature.

Scott saw his defeat, and manfully acknowledged it. But instead of giving up he drew upon that part of his ability so long latent—the unequaled ability to write stories. And from the beginning of the famous Waverly series, for seventeen years, he delighted the world with his inimitable stories that seemed to come to being from some inexhaustible source. During that period he wrote over thirty novels. His novels are interesting and instructive. Whoever has not read at least some of Scott’s novels has missed much pleasure in the

line of wholesome and entertaining fiction. His novels are so well known that it scarcely seems necessary to mention them. Who has not heard of *Ivanhoe* or *Guy Mannering* or *Rob Roy* or *Redgauntlet*, or *Old Mortality*? Who has not been charmed by his intensely interesting tales of the Crusades as given in such novels as *Count Robert of Paris*, or *The Talisman*? For good clean fiction Scott cannot be outclassed. As some one has said: "He hurries us along at a speed strictly proportionate to the interest of the story."

But just when success seemed assured, when it seemed as if he could at last rest from his arduous toil, news came of the failure of a publishing firm of which he was silent partner, and he suddenly found himself liable to a debt of £117,000. By availing himself of the technicalities of the law he might have escaped the debt. But scorning such methods as dishonest, he set about with unflinching courage to fulfil his obligations. In two years he earned his creditors almost £40,000. But the strain was too great. Mere flesh and blood gave way, and he died peacefully at his estate at Abbotsford.

An eminent poet, an unequaled novelist, Scott was above all things a man.

## XXIII. WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR (1775-1864).

The scholarly Edward Gibbon could hardly have finished his monumental *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* when there came into the world one who was destined to a stormy career. Of all poets he resembles Byron most in his career. Passionate and impulsive to the highest degree, he could not help being drawn into the vortex of strife.

He was continually getting into lawsuits and it is here that he wasted the fortune he inherited. In this he reminds us of our own writer, Cooper. At length, like Byron, his rashness led him into what was practically exile. After leaving his family in his old age, he died in Florence. It was doubtless a view of his own turbulent life that caused him to pen the suggestive poem :

“ Child of a day, thou knowest not  
The tears that overflow thine urn,  
The gushing eyes that read thy lot,  
Nor, if thou knewst, couldst return !  
And why the wish ! the pure and blessed  
Watch like thy mother o'er thy sleep.  
Oh, peaceful night ! Oh, envied rest !  
Thou wilt not ever see her weep.”

The adjectives, romantic and mythological, written with superlatives, characterize Landor. One

has only to glance at the titles of his works to realize the latter,—*The Shades of Agamemnon*, *Thrasymedes and Eunoe*, *The Hamadryad*, *Acon and Rodophe*, etc. His poetry never attained first rank, and it is through his prose works, chiefly, that he is famous. His extended work, *Imaginary Conversations*, is to be considered as strictly original. It consists of great numbers of supposed dialogues between the world's celebrities, and the background that he draws is invariably true to history.

Of his poetic works, the most famous are *Gebir*, *Pericles and Aspasia*, and various shorter poems published under the general title of *Hellenics*.

To sketch, briefly, the life of Charles Lamb (1775–1834), a contemporary of Landor, we must swing to the opposite pole. We shall understand much about Lamb, if it is merely said that he was totally different from Landor. Modest, shy, patient, no greater antithesis could be found.

Lamb's life is a noble example of loyalty to duty and of gentleness. Face to face with poverty almost all his life, working as a clerk in the office of the East India Company for thirty years, he

yet cares for his unfortunate sister as a mother and sets a standard of nobility that is well worth contemplating. At length being granted a pension, he is free to devote his entire time to literature.

His poems and other works of like nature are of little consequence. The two things for which we remember him are his *Tales from Shakespeare*, and *Essays of Elia*. In the former he has given us the stories (designed primarily for children) of Shakespeare's plays and in the latter he gives us a mixture of humor and pathos that is at once new and captivating. Some of this work was done by himself and his sister jointly.

Lamb is not a great writer; but his gentle humor and pathos, and refined expression have won for him a place in literature.

#### XXIV. THOMAS DEQUINCEY (1785-1859).

The study of the peculiar and profound life of DeQuincey brings us once more into the region of dreams. For Thomas DeQuincey lived within himself. In this respect we are reminded of the spirit-racked Bunyan; his fondness for the mysterious is like that of Coleridge; but his marvelous power of portraying the erratic flights of an

equally wonderful imagination may be likened to none other.

Thomas DeQuincey doubtless received the first literary stimuli from his father, a Manchester merchant of literary tastes. However, his father died when he was but seven years old and his education was taken care of by his mother. At an early age he became famous for his Latin poetry and was able to speak (classic) Greek fluently at fifteen. About this time he ran away from the Manchester school and went to London, where he lived the life of a vagrant, coming directly in contact with the darker substrata of city life. After a year of aimless wandering he became reconciled to his people and was sent to Oxford, where he completed his education.

To those who affirm that athletics are an indispensable requisite of thorough intellectual training, Thomas DeQuincey stands as an irrefutable contradiction. He was so absorbed in his lessons that, to use the words of a biographer, "he scarcely raised his head from his books." True, he was not a Samson physically. We are told he was a frail, thin man not more than five feet in height. But his brow was wrinkled with furrows of thought. And within that luminous mind

DeQuincey dwelt. His body was of secondary consideration. Diminutive as it was, it impeded him. Its clayey attributes continually prevented him from traversing those golden vistas which his ever active imagination was continually disclosing to him. It was here, and not in the outer world, with its din and ceaseless activity, that he literally "lived, moved and had his being."

While still at college he had begun the use of opium as a stimulant and later in life being troubled with an irritation of the stomach, he began to use it more freely than ever. Before long he found himself in the clutches of the terrible habit, and his imagination, always active, became doubly more so under the influences of this drug. His experience in the use of opium, how great a grip it had upon him, how he fought it at last successfully, and the terrible consequences, he has pictured for us in his great work, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. Here he pictures those wonderful dreams. His style and diction are entirely appropriate. The reader feels the solid ground of practical every-day life slipping away and himself entering into the silent, tomb-like existence of another world where everything is boundless and limitless. With unparalleled and

unerring skill he leads us along in a realm where everything is dim, shadowy and silent. Everything is reckoned in ages, centuries and æons. We fly through the air for countless leagues, or fall headlong over frightful precipices into bottomless abysses. Or again we are locked into the age-long solitude of some ancient tomb where countless eternities pass by. Or we rise to some giddy height and see hemispheres smite each other like Titanic foemen until they are shattered into a myriad of fragments.

And so the fascinating experiences continue. The dreams were made possible only because of his great erudition. Few men have been gifted with a mind retentive enough to enable them to accumulate such a vast store of general knowledge. A glance at the titles of some of his works will show how wide a range his learning could cover: *Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts*, *The Flight of a Tartar Tribe*, *Dream-Fugue on the Theme of Sudden Death*, *Suspiria De Profundis*, *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow*.

These two things—his imagination and erudition—have never ceased to excite the wonder of men of letters wherever he is known, and he will

always stand as one of the greatest subjective prose writers of literature.

### XXV. GEORGE GORDON (LORD) BYRON (1788-1824).

Born of parentage noted for fighting and fierce temperament, we could hardly expect the personality of Lord Byron to be other than it was. His father deserted his mother shortly after he was born, and he was left to the care of his mother "who alternately smothered him with caresses and beat him with the fire shovel." It is not to be supposed that the inborn *hauteur* of Byron was rendered more angelic by such treatment. Some one has very aptly said that he had three misfortunes—his mother, his title, and his lameness.

His first poetic venture met with harsh treatment at the hands of critics, and stung to madness he struck back at them in the withering satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. He then spent some time traveling and gave us as the result of his observations the first two cantos of *Childe Harolde*, which met with instant and unprecedented applause. Never in the annals of literature did a writer so suddenly spring into

fame. The public which had been charmed by the heroic tales of border warfare and mediæval tournaments as told by the stirring verse of Scott, now turned *en masse* to the dashing young peer who as Childe Harolde was painting before the world, on a canvas of poetry, the historic scenery of all Europe. His poems appeared in rapid succession, each time with a storm of popular approval. But his favor was short lived as it was sudden. For in 1816 he became divorced from his wife. What the reasons were, or who was to blame, was never known, but the public laid the guilt on Byron and he suddenly found himself ostracized. Spurning the country that had so treated him, he left England never to return.

In 1823 he chartered a vessel and sailed for Greece, to aid them in the war for independence they were then waging against the Turks. But before he could take an active part in the war, he died of a fever in the camp at Missolonghi.

Revolutionary, dissipated and headstrong, Byron was not without his virtues. As one critic says, "there were two Byrons, one passionate, haughty and insolent; the other kind, generous and noble." Whether it was his fault or the fault of society, it is undeniably certain that Byron and society were

hopelessly out of tune with each other. He rebelled at everything. His proud nature bent itself for combat at the least sign of restraint. He bowed the knee to none. His disposition to his fellow man was peculiar. As some one has well said, "he was insolent to his superiors, haughty to his equals, and kind to his inferiors." His untamed nature is seen in *Manfred* where the hero, surrounded by friends and feeling the end, cries out :

" Back ye baffled fiends,  
The hand of death is on me—but not on yours !

But the fact that there is another side to his nature can also be seen. His *Epistle to Augusta* is a singularly tender poem. He starts out by saying :

" My sister, my sweet sister ; if a name  
Dearer and purer were, it should be thine  
Mountains and seas divide us, but I claim  
No tears, but tenderness to answer mine."

In his *Fare Thee Well*, written presumably to his wife after they separated, he voices a sentiment and a tenderness that seems strangely foreign. The first stanza contains the oft quoted words :

“Fare thee well, and if forever,  
Still forever, fare thee well;  
Even tho’ unforgiving, never  
’Gainst thee shall my heart rebel.”

There are few lives indeed, that, however cold and unforbidding the exterior, do not have a kind, gentle heart for the favored few they love and trust. Byron was such a one. But continually baited and harried by society and the existing order of things that harmonized ill with his unique nature, it is small wonder that his thoughts and actions were those of conflict rather than peaceful tranquillity. As he retrospectively views himself in the *Epistle to Augusta* he completely sums up his life :

“ My life was a contest, since the day  
That gave me being, gave me that which marred  
The gift—a fate, or will, that walked astray;  
And I at times have found the struggle hard,  
And thought of shaking off my bonds of clay.”

Byron’s works fall into three classes—Narrative, satirical and dramatical. Under the first head may be grouped *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Giaour*, *Don Juan*, *Childe Harolde*, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, and *Mazeppa*. Under the second, *Eng-*

lish Bards and Scotch Reviewers, and *The Vision of Judgment*. Under the third, *Manfred*, and *Cain*.

*The Vision of Judgment* shows Byron at his best in satire. Southey had written a poem brimming over with fulsome eulogy for George the Third. Byron had small respect for the former and still less for the latter and the result was *The Vision of Judgment*, or a pretended description of the scene in heaven when the soul of George the Third ascended.

*Manfred* is a noble piece of work, but like many of the world's famous dramas—the Book of Job, for instance—was not written to be staged. On reading *Manfred* one at once thinks of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*. The scene is in the Alps Mountains, and the character,—a Byron in disguise,—who has delved too deeply into the mysteries of life, becomes tired of living, and the friends who before were compelled to serve him, appear and overcome him. In addition there are a great number of short poems otherwise classified as *Poems Set to Music*, and *Hebrew Melodies*.

Byron was a voluminous writer, but he wrote in haste and spent little time in polishing. Consequently his works are not so elegant as they might

be, and not infrequently errors of grammar are met with. Indeed he is at times undignified enough to stoop to actual profanity. But throughout all his productions, no matter where the scene is laid or what the nature of the plot may be, Byron has been able to produce but one character, and that is—Byron.

#### XXVI. PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792-1822).

Modest, sensitive, shrinking and effeminate, with a personality both impractical and visionary, Shelley found himself out of tune and at variance with the stern and moral world in which he lived. He was a continual misfit from his views on society to the exquisite fineness of his poetry.

True, his ideas of marriage and society are not what we would consider decent, and after making all due allowances, there are still some things that Shelley did that must be called wrong in no uncertain tone. But whatever his faults, the true admirer of Shelley likes to think that he did what he thought was right.

While still in his teens he was sent to Oxford where, after five months, he was expelled for his pamphlet, *The Necessity for Atheism*. Thereupon he married Harriet Westroke—he was nineteen

and she was sixteen—and after wandering about for some time they became reconciled to their parents. He soon afterward met a noted reformer named Godwin, who believed in the free love theory, and Shelley embraced the new doctrine to such an extent that he deserted his child-wife and eloped with the reformer's daughter, Mary Godwin, whom he married when his first wife died. Later he traveled on the continent, and in Italy composed much of his best poetry.

Shelley's life was one continual quest for beauty. It was the guiding star of his existence, but it was a fruitless quest. It seemed to be just within reach, but when he pursued it, it floated on like the "will-o'-the-wisp." It was ever in his mind's eye, but mirage-like could never be attained. Hence Shelley began to regard beauty with a reverential awe. He tells us in his *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* that :

"The awful shadow of some unseen power  
Floats tho' unseen amongst us—visiting  
This various world with as inconstant wing  
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower."

And in the next stanza remembering how often it has eluded him he asks :

“ Spirit of Beauty . . . where art thou gone?  
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,  
This dim, vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate ? ”

All of Shelley's poetry might be considered auto-biographical, but *Alastor*, one of his earliest works, particularly so. It represents a youth traveling all over the world in the eager search for that which is perfectly beautiful. After traversing all the countries of the earth he is led by intuition up a lonely river in Asia, and there in a rocky gorge, made ghastly bright by the rising moon, he realizes that his search was futile, but dies happy, knowing that what he failed to attain in this world will be made possible in the next.

In Italy Shelley was so impressed with the charms of Emilia Viviani, his wife's maid, that he composed *Epipsychedion* in her honor. Shelley thought that at last he had found the perfection of beauty, and that this perfection was incarnate in the being of Emilia Viviani. Years before he had thought the same of Harriet Westbroke, but finding out his error, he had forsaken her for Mary Godwin—his present wife. And so, while he does not desert his wife, yet he yearns for the beautiful Emilia, and urges that they fly together to

“. . . An Isle under the Ionion skies,  
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise,  
The blue *Æ*gean girds this chosen home,  
With ever-changing sound and light and foam,  
Kissing the sifted sands.”

He compares Harriet Westbroke to a comet that crossed his path, and his wife to the moon, but Emilia is the resplendent sun, and boldly asserts the dangerous doctrine

“That love makes all things equal.”

But barring its teachings, *Epipsychedion* is a magnificent piece of literature. The wooing words, the splendid imagery, and the fine contrasts, all blend and flow in such gentle, undulating pentameters that scarce a harsh syllable appears to mar the beauty.

It was the death of Keats that moved him to write *Adonais*, his masterpiece, and the second great elegiac in the English language. It is closely modeled after Milton's *Lycidas*, and differs from that much as the two poets differed in their lives and personalities. With the genius and skill of a master, he makes all nature to mourn the death of Adonais. He tells us that

“ Morning sought her eastern watchtower, and her hair unbound,  
Wet with the tears that should adorn the ground,  
Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle day ;  
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,  
Pale ocean in unquiet slumber lay,  
And the wild winds flew around, sobbing in their dismay.”

But after running the whole gamut of human emotions, after questioning whether after all life is worth the living, his impulsive spirit becomes subdued, and in the measured tones of a philosopher he bids us peace :

“ Peace, peace ! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—  
He hath awakened from the dream of life—  
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep  
With phantoms an unprofitable strife.”

In addition to the poems already noted his great lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound*, *Queen Mab*, *The Revolt of Islam*, and *The Sensitive Plant* might be mentioned. His odes *To a Skylark*, *To the Cloud*, *To the West Wind*, and *To Night*, rank with those of Keats as the best in the language.

*Prometheus Unbound*, a lyrical drama, is his daring as well as his greatest work. The drama is a gigantic allegory starting with the fable of Prometheus chained to a rock by Jupiter and condemned to have his vitals torn out daily by a vul-

ture. Prometheus is humanity, and Jupiter is the system of religion which we obey. The story as he tells it is that a conspiracy was formed on Mt. Olympus which dethroned Jupiter and in the new order of things, Prometheus was liberated. The allusion is only too apparent. Mankind must always suffer and can never be free as long as they fear religion ! and he dwells at great length on how a veritable golden age will ensue, once the old order of things is overthrown. But it is not for us to discuss the theology of the work, but the art, and assuredly there is much of the latter present. In the short lyrics, interspersed here and there, Shelley is at his best. The imagery in these is flawless. For an idea of the exquisite beauty of some of the parts, consider but one line, where he talks of

“An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,”

and by multiplying one's imagination, it may be possible to faintly picture the beauty of *Prometheus Unbound*.

As to Shelley's poetical ability, there has been much discussion. His poetry, in many respects, is so different from the poetry of others that it must be judged in a class by itself. Shelley is a

poet of the ethereal. He is so light and evanescent that our senses, clogged with the clay of this world, can with difficulty perceive him. And he soars into altitudes that are quite beyond us. How then can we judge him ?

That is Shelley the poet. But Shelley the man has still many of the attributes of other people. He realizes that he is held back by the same clay that restrains other mortals, and in his eager desire to snap the bonds and overtake his imagination in its lofty soaring, he breaks forth with passionate earnestness in the matchless lines *To the West Wind* :

“ Make me thy lyre even as the forest is :  
What if my leaves are falling like its own !  
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies  
Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,  
Sweet tho’ in sadness, Be thou, spirit fierce,  
My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one ! ”

To sum it all up, we must say that to the great mass of readers, Shelley’s poetry will, indeed, appear as “ sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.” But to the few who are able to climb, even partly, the dizzy heights to which he has soared, Shelley must ever appear as a transcendental genius and one of the greatest masters of the English lyric.

## XXVII. JOHN KEATS (1795-1821).

While a contemporary of Byron and Shelley, Keats was quite different from both of them. Of the two, however, Keats was more nearly akin to Shelley, both in personality and as regards the subject-matter of his poetry. To him beauty was everything. It was not a vast something, unattainable by mortals, as Shelley thought, but something that actually existed and in the reach of all, and to be enjoyed as much as possible. As Wordsworth was lost to everything in the sublime contemplation of nature, so Keats was enraptured at the sight of everything that was beautiful, that

“Beauty is truth, truth, beauty, that is all  
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know,”<sup>1</sup>

was literally his creed. And it was this principle so strongly imbedded in his nature that led him to become the poet that he was, as we shall see.

John Keats was born of humble parentage near London. His father was manager of a livery barn. He was sent to various schools by his father, but at fifteen he was left an orphan. About this time his guardian took him from school and apprenticed him to a surgeon. But he had

<sup>1</sup> *Ode on a Grecian Urn.*

little or no liking for the profession, and one afternoon when he should have been listening to a discourse on surgery, his mind wandered out of the room and into the realm of nature where beauty held full sway. So he gave up surgery and began to write poetry. In this Keats was different from most poets, as it was his only means of earning a livelihood.

His first work *Endymion* was severely criticized. It was an immature work, and while it contained many beautiful passages, was not what it could or should have been. But Keats' sensitive nature recoiled from the harsh criticism, and as he died but a few years later his death was popularly believed to have been due to the uncalled-for censure. In the opening lines of *Endymion* his creed of beauty is clearly stated :

“ A thing of beauty is a joy forever :  
Its loveliness increases ; it will never  
Pass into nothingness ; but will still keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams.”

*The Eve of St. Agnes* is a beautiful story whose setting is laid deep in the gorgeous past “ when knighthood was in flower.” The story is told

and the scenes are painted by the beauty-loving Keats with true artistic skill. When we consider that this finely wrought poem appeared soon after the brutal censure of his *Endymion*, we can believe that it was truly

“. . . music yearning like a god in pain.”<sup>1</sup>

*The Pot of Basil* is a rather gruesome tale, the foundation of which is laid in Italy. The story is touching, but the flavor is distinctly unlike that of Keats. It is in *Hyperion*, however, that we feel that Keats has reached his high water mark in lofty style and theme. Note the stately manner in which it begins :

“ Deep in the shady sadness of a vale  
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,  
Far from the fiery noon and eve’s one star,  
Sat gray-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone,  
Still as the silence round about his lair ;  
Forest on forest hung about his head  
Like cloud on cloud.”

It tells how the throne of Saturn, ruler of the universe, was overthrown by other gods ; how the Titans were bound, and how the old order of

<sup>1</sup> *Eve of St. Agnes*.

things was superseded by the new. It is masterly epic and we read the three books with increasing interest only to discover with regret that the work is a fragment, having never been completed.

Much of Keats' fame rests on his odes. Of these his *Ode on Indolence*, *To Psyche*, *To a Nightingale*, *On Melancholy*, *On Fame*, and *On a Grecian Urn*, are considered the best in the language. The ode *On a Grecian Urn* starts out with the immortal lines :

“ Thou still unravished bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvian historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme.”

But the beauty-filled life which promised so much was destined soon to cease. For consumption began to show itself and from the first was seen to be incurable. With the fatal disease fastening itself upon him he left England and lingered for a few months in Naples. But it was the beginning of the end, and with the expression, “Thank God, it has come,” he died.

While on board ship, on his last earthly voyage he composed the beautiful lines :

“ Bright star ! would that I were steadfast as thou art—  
Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night  
And watching with eternal lids apart, . . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast  
To feel forever its soft fall and swell,  
Awake forever in a sweet unrest,  
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath  
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bright Star*, etc.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE VICTORIAN AGE

#### (a) *The Prose Writers*

#### XXVIII. THE VICTORIAN AGE.

A CORRECT understanding of the Victorian Age is essential in order to be able to account for the great prose and poetical masterpieces which have been produced. We have seen in the past how powerfully the Elizabethan Age influenced authors and how, coming as it did, it produced a dazzling glory in the realm of letters that has never been surpassed. And so for reasons quite similar we are compelled to devote some time to the Victorian Age—the greatest age in the history of English Literature.

Much might be summed up by saying that the Victorian Age is second to the Elizabethan Age. The forces which were the cause of their greatness were in many respects similar. Both are signalized by epoch-making inventions and discoveries which are most potent in rendering life more

comfortable. Both are marked by great discoveries. At this point they differ somewhat. In the Elizabethan Age, the known world was small in comparison to the unknown. Trade with the East was for the first time being put on a secure basis, and the spices, silks and gems of the luxurious Orient were becoming part of the well-to-do Englishman's life. While across the dark Atlantic in the crimson Occident, a new world was being brought to notice, which promised the realization of the most cherished hopes.

But in the lapse of time practically all of the world has been discovered and explored. England has annexed the Indian Empire on the east, while on the west the New World has become no longer rosy possibility, but a prosaic reality. Hence the epoch-making inventions of the Victorian Age have not been in the physical world, but in the mental world. Modern skill has enabled the manufacturing of better scientific instruments, with the result that the moist earth and the stellar universe told more marvelous tales than heretofore. Scientific data of untold value was thus accumulated. Then arose such men as Spencer, Huxley and Darwin, who strove to unite these strands into an unbreakable cable of philosophy. Darwin startled the

world with his *Origin of Species* and the theory of evolution. Astronomers were brought face to face with the nebular hypothesis, and the fact that the laws of nature on this world hold good on the most distant planet and star. Hitherto mysterious diseases were being analyzed and cures discovered for those before deemed incurable. The result was that the equilibrium of the thinking world was for a time shaken, and as many of the conclusions at first sight seemed at variance with the cardinal teachings of the Church, the latter was forced into a conflict, and made the target for infidels and agnostics. Science propounded these seeming incompatible questions to the Church and sneeringly demanded an answer. The Church, unable for a time to maintain the argument, lost many able men who became infidels. Tennyson's whole life was a struggle between an intellect that could not be satisfied, and an inborn faith that could not be silenced. But many others were completely swept over the abyss. It was an era of New Thought and marked the formation of strange cults and isms for the credulous and seduced.

We who are favorably situated in the present day have, from the vantage point of the twentieth

century, seen with profit the struggle of the nineteenth, and its issue. That when the din had subsided, and the smoke had lifted, the two contestants—science and religion—were after all not apart, that both were entirely compatible and consistent with each other, and that the plants and the rocks and the stars, when rightly read, told the same mysterious tale of a loving Father that has so long been recorded on the wonderful pages of the Book of Life.

#### XXIX. THOMAS CARLYLE (1795–1881).

The Victorian Age is famous as much for its prose writers as for its poets—if not more. It will be our plan to consider the prose writers first. They roughly fall into three classes, (1) Philosophical writers; (2) Historians; (3) Critics. Of these we can devote space to but one representative of the first two classes, and two of the last.

Thomas Carlyle, like the immortal Burns, was a native of Scotland. He was born at Dumfrieshire, of the kind of parents that make a nation strong. They intended him for the ministry, and to this end his education was planned. But when he became grown up he developed views, religiously, that prevented this.

After turning his attention to teaching and law, respectively, he began to contribute articles to various papers, and so began his literary career. He began to study German, and as regards his literary work, this was the most important event of his life.

Carlyle's greatest work which gives him rank as a philosopher—and that too as most original—is *Sartor Resartus* (literally, the tailor patched), in which he gives to the world his *Philosophy of Clothes*. In it he pretends to have discovered the manuscripts of an eccentric and philosophic old German, "Teufelsdröckh," who lived the life of a hermit in the town of "Weissnichtwo" (i. e., I know not where). But while the odd name and whimsical manner of presentation may seem to give a farcical or humorous context to the book, the reader soon discovers his error. For the queer old Teufelsdröckh, perched in his lonely room high up in one of the tall houses, looks over the sleeping town of Weissnichtwo and utters philosophy that would credit a Solon or a Socrates. In this work Carlyle points out that the physical world about us, our very bodies, are but "clothes" of the inward spirit. That the time will come when this body must die and disintegrate, as

thousands before and after have done and will do, and that even the very heavens that "hang about us as a vesture" will be swept away, and only the spirit hitherto concealed shall endure. Let not the reader think that Carlyle is a second-rate preacher who seeks notoriety by cheap sentimentalism. Far from it. But he cries in stentorian tones against the shams of society, and deals the petty tyrannies, concerning which we have been so long silent, their well merited death-blows. *Sartor Resartus* must always rank among the great works of this age.

His *History of the French Revolution* is another epoch-making work which ranks him among the great historians. It is found on the shelves of every library and its very name has become a household word. He relates the stirring times of the French Revolution in a way that captivates the reader's interest from the first. His vigorous style, the use of the historical present tense, and the skill with which the scenes are portrayed, have, together, produced on the pages of historical narrative a dramatic effect that is almost without parallel.

Among his other works might be mentioned his *History of Frederick the Great*, *Heroes and*

*Hero-worship*, and the *Life of Schiller*, as well as his German translations.

Carlyle's style is unique. It might be summed up in the words massive, rugged and sincere. He secures the highest rhetorical effect without intending it. In reading his works the reader encounters a masculine strength that is entirely new, but after the first effect of strangeness is worn off, the effect of the novel mannerisms are not unpleasing. As a master of the English vocabulary he often uses odd and semi-obsolete terms. That, and the custom of capitalizing the nouns (a habit derived, doubtless, from the German, of which he was an enthusiastic student), gives his works a vigor and strength seldom met with elsewhere.

### XXX. THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY (1800-1859).

Few men, indeed, are found whose genius enables them to live a life as successful and many-sided as the life of Macaulay. Macaulay was a very precocious child, and, as is usual in such cases, an insatiable reader. This trait, coupled with an almost perfect memory—a memory so perfect that he is said to have been able to repeat *Paradise Lost*—gave him such general knowledge of affairs

covering a wide range of subjects, that he very nearly approaches the plane of erudition occupied by the great DeQuincey.

Making the most of this gift, Macaulay was enabled to play with credit the rôle of poet, historian, essayist, and statesman. As a poet he has given us his interesting *Lays of Ancient Rome*, which contains such selections as *The Battle of Lake Regillus*, *Horatius at the Bridge*—familiar to every schoolboy. His poetry is all purely narrative, and is a close parallel to Scott's, with the exception that instead of tales of border warfare, he sought among the classic tales of early Rome for his subject-matter. As a historian he has given us his *History of England from the Accession of James II*, which, next to Green's *Short History of English People*, is considered one of the most scholarly and polished histories ever written. As an essayist he is seldom excelled. In his essays on *Clive*, *Hastings*, *Milton*, *Johnson* and others, he has enabled us to associate with the characters as though they were living.

As an essayist and historian, Macaulay's style is clear, energetic and forceful. It is, in fact, hard to improve upon. No thinking man can read his history without being charmed. There

he has the added quality of oratory, and he gives us innumerable selections that might rightly be called poetical prose, and might serve as models of perfect prose composition. But as a poet, Macaulay falls short when we judge him by the type of great English poets. The case can be tersely stated by saying that Macaulay was a second-rate poet because he was a first-rate prose writer. He represented a large class of complacent people whose equilibrium is undisturbed because they fail to see anything wrong on the surface. He was too well satisfied with the condition of affairs to delve deep or soar high into the unknown realm of the possible and the probable. "An acre in Middlesex is better than a province in Utopia," was his favorite maxim. The many voices of that great Within-World—that world where the mighty geniuses of such men as Bunyan, Wordsworth and DeQuincey have their existence—were unheard by him. He could not appreciate the fine flights of fancy as voiced by these writers because he was ignorant of their source. His eyes saw only the material greatness of his native England, and as a result he lost that "better portion" which is the heritage of those who break through the gilded covering of material

life and seek for truth in the unexplored regions beyond.

### XXXI. JOHN RUSKIN (1819-1900).

Critic, economist and thinker, John Ruskin stands as peer to the ablest among his fellow men. With ideas misunderstood and motives misconstrued, with his cherished plans denounced as visionary, and himself fanatic—he still pursued his plans, dictated by the clear voice of a clean conscience, and with none but a just God to uphold him. The time is coming when Ruskin will be hailed as a profound philosopher and a true philanthropist; when his plan of society will be considered as the natural resultant of a great and noble mind, and not the shallow scheme of a harmless maniac. But time is required. It requires not one generation but many generations—aye even centuries, before the noble and unselfish ideas of a great mind filter through the scum and dross of this world's wickedness and shine with the resplendent beauty of true goodness and true nobility. Homer alive begged in his native city, but the honor of being called the birthplace of Homer dead was claimed by seven cities. Washington, praying behind the snow-drifts of Valley Forge, is made the

target for intrigues and cabals ; Lincoln, pacing the lonely chambers of the White House in the dim hours of the morning, is the object of abuse, defamation and lastly the assassin's steel. But to-day a proud and vainglorious nation counts them among her greatest. Milton, blind and neglected, is thrust into obscurity and hides for his life. But to-day after a lapse of three centuries an equally proud nation recognizes in his masterpieces the stamp of a mighty genius. And so to this endless catalogue of examples that began when the world began and will end only when the world ends, Ruskin forms no exception.

Ruskin was a lover of the beautiful. He loved nature and he loved all the beautiful things that man's genius enabled him to make. But he believed that nature in her pristine glory was more perfect and more beautiful than anything that man could produce. He was an enemy of the city because it was artificial, because it was the breeding place of dirt, squalor and unsightliness, and the yet more hideous evils of depravity and immorality. To him the life, wholesome and simple, and close to the matchless scenery of nature which comes perfect from the hand of an all-wise God, was infinitely to be preferred to the artificial

luxuries, the deceitful shams, and gilded restraints of city life. And so he sought constantly by voice, by example, and by money and other material aids, to educate humanity to better modes of living and thinking. Especially did Ruskin labor with the poor. He built them model homes, and sought in every way to better their lot. And yet, in spite of all this, history regards his reforms—actuated by the purest and most sincere motives—as impracticable!

Born of gifted and artistic parents and reared in a Christian home, Ruskin had the advantage of rare heredity and rare training. He himself tells us that nothing was ever told him that was not true, nor was anything ever promised him that was not given. Is it any wonder that at the age of eight he was the author of works of biography, travel, history, and theology?

His works are principally on criticism and economy. To these he has given strange and fanciful names. His most popular work is *Sesame and Lilies*. Among others the most noteworthy are: *The Stones of Venice*, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, *Modern Painters*, *Unto This Last*, *Fors Clavigera*, and *The Crown of Wild Olive*.

Ruskin's style is wonderful. Adjectives that

apply to some iridescent raindrop seem the only ones suitable to employ. It is by no means too much to say that it is a model of strength and beauty. His diction is not harsh nor is it filled with words of erudite length, but it flows along as smoothly and transparently as the limpid wavelets of some sunny stream that he may be describing. Much of his subject-matter, though vital, would in the hands of another seem prosaic and uninteresting. But Ruskin, with the wonderful alchemy of skill and kindness, transforms it into radiant, living English, glowing with a message as noble as the heart that brought it forth.

### XXXII. MATTHEW ARNOLD (1822-1888).

Of the great lights of the Victorian Age, other than the ones under discussion, we must mention some of the most important. Among these, the stern, apostolic character of John Henry Newman (1801-1890), theologian, stands out in relief. So also does that of John Richard Green (1837-1883), who has given us in his *Short History of the English People* one of the most complete and scholarly histories ever written, a work that is used as a text-book in numberless institutions of learning. So also is James Antony Froude (1818-1894), who

has given us a most polished work in his *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada*. We now turn our attention to Matthew Arnold, poet, critic, and theologian.

Matthew Arnold is another of those great lights, whose life and writings faithfully mirror the intellectual advancement and the moral upheaval of the Victorian Age. Like some of our illustrious New Englanders, Arnold descended from a long line of educated parentage. His father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, with whom we always associate the name Rugby,—he being the head master of that famous school for boys—and his grandfather were ministers, and prominent in literary and ecclesiastical affairs. If heredity counts for anything—and we know that it does—Arnold was the recipient of a wonderful heritage of faith and intellectuality. It would be interesting to know just how the possession of this impetus helped him to meet the stormy issues of his time.

The Victorian Age, as we have seen, was the time when the great conflict between science and religion was fiercest. All the great men of the age, whether willingly or not, were, from the very nature of the case, drawn into the struggle. The minds of those who espoused the Church had

not broadened enough, nor had the intellects of those who defended science advanced far enough, to see that in the last analysis there was no cause for dispute, but that each was the champion of the other, and that Faith and Reason were not at enmity with each other but were indissolubly bound together.

In common with others, Arnold was plunged into this maelstrom of conflict, and thereafter his life became a struggle. We shall see later that the great Tennyson was similarly entangled, and how he struggled. We shall see how that after a lifetime of conflict, Tennyson at last touched the unshaken foundations of the Rock of Ages and stood secure. Not so with Arnold. Fighting all his life against doubt, he seems to come no nearer the truth. Perhaps we shall never understand the extent to which Arnold wrestled with these doubts. Some faint idea we can glean from his poetry. The universe was to him an unsolved problem ; the very planets in the skies interrogated him,

“ And the calm moonlight seemed to say :

‘ Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast,  
Which neither deadens into rest,  
Nor even feels the fiery glow  
That whirls the spirit from itself away,  
But fluctuates to and fro ? ’ ”

And the more he seeks to grapple with these doubts the more he realizes that this world is a "brazen prison" from which but few can make their escape, and in desperation he cries out :

" Is there no life, but these alone ?  
Madman or slave, must man be one ? "

In the *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse* he speaks of

" Wandering between two worlds, one dead  
The other powerless to be born."

And in *Dover Beach* he says that

". . . We are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

Such is the melancholy refrain throughout his poetry. And while far from being an atheist, an infidel, or an agnostic, he is equally far from being a Christian, and the best we can say of him is that he was a free-thinker with his mind open to receive the truth.

Although winning distinction as a critic and a theologian, it is as a poet that we wish to view him. Being in contact with poetry all his life and having an appreciative sense, Arnold naturally

wrote poetry as an outlet to his feelings. While in reading his poetry one is impressed with the fact that it is not as free and spontaneous as it might be, or as true poetic feeling would produce it, yet it is far from true to say that his poems are artificial and musty with scholarship. Arnold is not considered a great poet, nor indeed does he pose as such. But he is the author of some beautiful and artistic poetry. Aside from the fact that he is prone to take us off on long and often tedious similes in his narratives, we must admit that his verses bear the imprint of one who is both a poet and a scholar.

His important works are the *Obermann Once More*, *Sohrab and Rustum*, *Thyrsis*, *Stanzas to the Memory of Obermann*, *Stanzas from the Grandè Chartreuse*, *Balder Dead*, *Tristram and Iseult*, *The Forsaken Merman*, *A Summer Night*, and many other works of criticism. For Arnold was one of the great critics of the times.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE VICTORIAN AGE (*Continued*)

#### (b) *The Poets*

XXXIII. ALFRED (LORD) TENNYSON (1809–1892).

JUST a trifle over a hundred years ago there was born in Somersby, Lincolnshire, to the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, a son that was in after years to charm the English speaking races with the incomparable grandeur of his poetry. Shy and sensitive, young Tennyson lived the life of the average English boy. Like Shakespeare, he roamed the fields of his native shire and drank in the beauties of nature that in after years should be given to us in his verses. After finishing the work at a near-by grammar school, he went to Trinity College, which on account of his father's death he left in 1830, without taking a degree. Three years later his life was again saddened by the loss of his bosom friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, a loss which was to give to the world the greatest of elegies—*In Memoriam*.

The works of Alfred Tennyson mark the culmination of Anglo-Saxon poetry. Since the time that the wandering scop and gleeman chanted the deeds of some illustrious chieftain in the barbarous mead-halls of our Saxon forefathers, to the advent of Tennyson, a span of nearly fourteen centuries, the innate strength and genius of this the greatest of races has been slowly but surely evolving and building up.

But it required all these long years before a poet could be produced who should be a fitting topstone to the Anglo-Saxon pyramid of achievement in the realm of verse.

Tennyson's poetry is great because it is Catholic in scope. No one is too unlettered or too learned to understand and appreciate it. From the absorbing series of Arthur stories to the philosophic depth of *De Profundis* and *In Memoriam*, there is a range of poetry graduated to the wants and desires of all. He partakes of the greatness of all the great writers. He has the psychologic insight of Shakespeare, the sublimity of Milton, the narrative powers of Scott, the strength of Byron, the lyric sweetness of Shelley, and the beauty of Keats—all toned down and welded together, a truly wonderful amalgamation.

Above all things, Tennyson's poems (*i. e.*, the non-narrative poems) are autobiographical, without being so intended. An intelligent study of these poems is a study of his life. One feels, indeed, that Tennyson, in the widest sense, was not a poet by determination, but rather by chance. That the real vocation of that mighty intellect was to grapple with the great problems of society, of philosophy, of theology, and that his great poetical masterpieces are but records of those struggles.

One of the most interesting facts along this line is the change in his outlook upon the world. Just what Tennyson's outlook, as revealed in his poetry, was is something that, for some unknown reason, is not generally known. And yet it is voiced and reiterated in no uncertain tones. At first, bubbling over with enthusiasm, his hopes and ideas were most optimistic. With ardent hopes and youthful desire of idealization, he looked

“Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing  
warm,

With the standards of the peoples plunging through the  
thunder storm,”<sup>1</sup>

and he was eagerly waiting

<sup>1</sup> *Locksley Hall.*

“Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags  
were furled

In the parliament of man, the federation of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

So while *Locksley Hall* is written in a serious vein the tone is confidentially optimistic. But *Locksley Hall* is one of his first poems. His life and his life's work is before him. The coming years would either verify or deny the sentiments voiced in his youth.

And now let us note the results. The years have passed. Tennyson is an old man now. But as a man above all things desiring to be honest with himself and the world, he gives us the answer without a falter, and that answer is *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*. Mature in years and wisdom, this venerable sage deems it not disgraceful to admit that the optimistic outcries of his youth were wrong:

“‘Forward!’ rang the voices then, and of the many mine  
was one,

Let us hush this cry of Forward till ten thousand years  
have gone!”<sup>2</sup>

In his youth he had hoped much from evolution. But sad experience had taught him the fallacy of such a hope.

<sup>1</sup> *Locksley Hall*.

<sup>2</sup> *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*.

“ Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good  
And Reversion ever dragging Evolution in the mud.”<sup>1</sup>

With the fondness of immaturity he had viewed man potentially. He tried to “ dip into the future far as human eye could see ” and build up a magnificent superstructure of what man might do and could do. The future was rosy. But the pitiless years taught him to view man as he really is. The shallow coating of false eulogism is broken and the rotten, corrupt interior of reality is laid bare. And Tennyson, reeling from the sight, exclaims :

“ Are we devils, are we men ?  
Sweet St. Francis of Assisi, would that he were here  
again ! ”<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

“ From the golden alms of blessing, man has coined himself  
a curse,  
Rome of Cæsar, Rome of Peter, which was crueller, which  
was worse ? ”<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

“ When was age so crammed with malice, madness, written,  
spoken lies ? ”<sup>4</sup>

And so on throughout *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, every one of the matchless octameters

<sup>1</sup> *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After.*   <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*   <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*   <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

records either surprise, dismay or righteous indignation as the true state of affairs is revealed. Even in his masterpiece *In Memoriam*, written many years before the above, his eyes are beginning to open, and as he compares the real man with the ideal man, he is forced to write :

“ No more ? A monster then, a dream,  
A discord. Dragons of the prime  
That tear each other in the slime  
Where mellow music matched to him.”

And let it be known that Tennyson’s philosophy is not to be hurriedly sounded by the novice. He was not only a great poet, but a great philosopher, for the two go hand in hand. In the *Ancient Sage* he says,

“ Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,  
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,  
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone, etc.,”

and it indicates the fundamental depths of his metaphysics. He even goes so far as to aver that when Hallam’s body was being brought home in a ship, his spirit left his (Tennyson’s) body and went to meet the ship and returned after an hour’s absence. (See *In Memoriam*, poem XII).

His poems cover a wide range of topics and testify to the greatness of his mind. From the legends of King Arthur which he collected and arranged in six books,—using as a groundwork Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*,—to the withering denunciations of social vices and inequalities in *Maud* and *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, he is ever the same,—strong, powerful, and true. It is difficult to classify his works, and to enumerate them would be a huge task. Of the important ones we note *Idylls of the King (The Arthurian Legends)*, *Enoch Arden*, *In Memoriam*, *The Princess*, *Maud*, *Locksley Hall*, and *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*. There are a great many short poems which are very often quoted from, as *Ulysses*, *The Lotus Eaters*, *Crossing the Bar*, *Ancient Sage*, etc., and also some forgotten dramas which he wrote against the advice of his friends.

The curious thing about *Maud* was that Tennyson always considered it his best poem and never quite forgave the public for the way they received it. For as soon as it came out, about ten thousand copies were sold on the strength of his reputation, but of the second edition, only three hundred copies were sold, the public being offended at the democratic way he treats the social problems in it.

*In Memoriam*, as we all know, was written by the grief-stricken Tennyson to the memory of his dear friend Arthur Henry Hallam, who died suddenly in Vienna. He was seventeen years writing the different poems which compose it, not writing them with any fixed plan in view. Later they were collected to form one poem,—the third great elegy in the English language.

The remaining vital fact about Tennyson's life is his religion. Living in the age when the somewhat slower progress of religion could not keep pace with the tremendous strides of science, Tennyson literally went "halting between two opinions." And as there was no scene at Carmel to decide between Baal or Jehovah, it required a lifetime to find the true way. Reared in a Christian home, the faith of his fathers was implanted too deeply to be eradicated. Yet on the other hand his intellect sternly demanded an answer to questions which could not, at that time, be answered. In *In Memoriam* he tells us :

"I falter where I firmly trod,  
And falling with my weight of cares  
Upon the great world's altar stairs  
That lead through darkness up to God."

He tells us further that he is :

“ An infant crying in the night,  
 An infant crying for the light,  
 And with no language but a cry.”

And so the tremendous internal struggle goes on. The theory that perhaps after all life is a treadmill, and the universe one gigantic machine that works automatically, attracts him with a serpent-like charm. But he knows that the charm is fatal. While he is unable to prove it to his own satisfaction, he longs to feel deep down in his heart :

“ That nothing walks with aimless feet ;  
 That not one life shall be destroyed,  
 Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
 When God hath made the pile complete.”<sup>1</sup>

But at last he is successful. His old age is made serene by the knowledge that the Great Pilot is ever at life’s helm.

“ Sunset and evening star  
 And one clear call for me !  
 And may there be no moaning of the bar,  
 When I put out to sea.

\*       \*       \*       \*

<sup>1</sup> *In Memoriam.*

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar.”<sup>1</sup>

#### XXXIV. ROBERT BROWNING (1812-1889 ).

Another of the great lights of the Victorian Age, though he spent most of his life in Italy, was Robert Browning, and for that reason we shall not be surprised to find many of the titles and much of the subject-matter of his poems are of Italian significance.

Browning married Elizabeth Barrett, a poetess who had already made a name for herself, and the union was a most happy one. Mrs. Browning continued to write poetry after they were married, and as Browning himself was a very voluminous writer our literature is indebted to the Brownings for much good poetry.

Browning was a very optimistic poet. Optimism shines throughout all his works. It is perhaps best expressed in the oft-quoted and familiar song of Pippa, a character in his play *Pippa Passes*:

<sup>1</sup> *Crossing the Bar.*

“ The year’s at the spring  
The day’s at the morn ;  
Morning’s at seven ;  
The hillside’s dew-pearled ;  
The lark’s on the wing ;  
The snail’s on the thorn :  
God’s in his heaven—  
All’s right with the world.”

The same sentiment is voiced in one of his finest poems, *Saul*. The evil spirit has been upon Saul. For three days the host, and Abner, the captain, have fasted and waited in fear and dread. Then they send for young David, fresh from the hills, to play on his harp before the king. So David, unaccompanied, creeps toward the great black tent whence no sound has escaped for three days ; no one dared approach. David after a short prayer enters and begins to play the tune that calls the sheep, and the song sung at harvest time, and then a funeral requiem,

“ Then the chorus intoned  
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.  
But I stopped here ; for here in the darkness Saul groaned ! ”

But after pausing, David goes on and sings of the gladness of life and the joy of living :

“ Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping from rock up to rock,  
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver  
shock  
Of the plunge in the pool’s living water, the hunt of the bear,  
And the sultriness showing the lion is crouched in his lair.  
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust di-  
vine,  
And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of  
wine,

\* \* \* \* \*

How good is man’s life, the mere living ! how fit to employ  
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy ! ”

The greater part of Browning’s poetry is in dramatic form usually with long monologues. For Browning is the master of dramatic monologue. The story is usually very short and of secondary importance. It is in the portraiture of character that he excels.

But it is not his spirit of optimism, ever unclouded, nor his portrayal of character, splendid as it is, that attracts the attention of the student of Browning quite as much as does his style. From the standpoint of smoothness of diction, his poetry is most unpoetic. He transposes phrases, inverts clauses, uses hyphens—in short he so twists and distorts our English that his productions can only with difficulty be read aloud. This of course

is not true of all his poetry, but is one of the prevailing characteristics.

Without doubt there will always be sharp contention between lovers of good literature as to whether or no Browning excels Tennyson. Nor is it the present intention to weary the reader with a tedious array of technical differences. The best that can be said is, that the reader study both and compare for himself. From what has been said so far in these brief notes, great differences will already be apparent, but the author is inclined to believe that these differences also are due to differences in kind of genius and not in degree. Some differences are apparent. His cheery optimism has already been noted ; it is again put forth most beautifully in the opening stanza of *Rabbi Ben Ezra* :

“ Grow old along with me !  
The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made ;  
Our times are in His hand  
Who saith, ‘ A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half ; trust God ; see all nor be afraid.’ ”

His faith also never wavered : in another stanza of the same philosophic poem, he gives utterance to one of his most sublime lines :

“Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure :  
What entered into thee,  
That was, is, and shall be :  
Time’s wheel runs back or stops : Potter and clay endure.”

As one reads Browning and becomes imbued with his spirit, the roughness of diction—mentioned above—fades away and only the sterling worth of the thought stands clear. But to get that thought one must do much more than read him over a few times. For Browning is a master at setting forth character. As a subtile analyst he stands in much the same relation to the other poets as George Eliot does to the other novelists. But it is not only present-day characters that he describes, but character of a thousand years ago. One has only to read and but partially comprehend such poems as *My Last Duchess*, *Andrea Del Sarto* and *The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed’s Church* to realize how fully Browning had steeped himself into mediæval lore. In the first poem—*My Last Duchess*—we have a typical example of a mediæval lord who could not understand why his wife cared more for pure, unfeigned love than for his “nine-hundred-year-old name” and all the stilted formalities of court life. In the second poem—*Andrea Del Sarto*—we have the

case reversed. A great artist that yearns to paint only great and noble pictures and to become a master like the great Raphael, but who is held back by the cold, mercenary greed of his proud wife, and meekly submits. In *The Bishop Orders His Tomb* we have another wonderful picture of a bishop who, with the death-dew on his brow, thought more of the villas he was forced to leave behind, the "peach-blossom marble" of his sarcophagus, and the rival he hated, than of any or all things that pertained to death and the next world.

This power of laying bare character by means of the monologue is best seen in *The Ring and the Book*, his masterpiece. The story—a count murdering his wife—is of the simplest, and unless we are acquainted with some of Browning's works we will be very much at a loss to understand how he managed to elaborate so brief and, by comparison, so commonplace a story into a masterpiece two thousand lines longer than the *Iliad*, or how he eliminates a seeming inevitable monotony by having every one of the characters—the husband, the suspected priest, the lawyer, etc.—tell the same story. But that is what Browning has done, and a tedious explanation will throw little light on the subject. One must read him and see for oneself.

And so we might discuss this wonderful writer and his abilities indefinitely, but perhaps enough has been said to make the reader wish to know him. We content ourselves with but a further enumeration of his important works. They are *Pippa Passes*, *Fra Lippo Lippi*, *Abt Vogler*, *Asolando*, *Caliban upon Setebos*, *A Blot On the 'Scutcheon*, *One Word More*, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*.

XXXV. ALGERNON C. SWINBURNE (1837-1909).

We are here brought face to face with one of the strangest characters in the history of English literature. Strange not on account of the absence of genius, but on account of its erratic manifestation. Had he properly restrained and controlled the forces that were within him he might to-day be viewed as one of the great lights in the firmament of letters. For Swinburne had genius ; his mastery of the English lyric is one of the most astonishing things in literature. His lines rise and fall in cadences which are unsurpassed and perhaps never equalled. He is the equal of Shelley. But for all that Swinburne is not, and never will be, a great poet. He failed utterly to curb and modify

that which was welling up in his mind, and where we might have the grandest masterpieces of literature we have only beautiful chaos and splendid ruins.

The student of Swinburne would fain be brief in his discussion of the subject-matter of his poetry, fearful lest what might be said would prove contradictory and obscure—as much of the poetry itself is. Strip it of its matchless style, and it must be confessed that the poetic mind hungering for the kernel of substantial goodness finds little else but husks. His poems divide themselves, roughly, into four classes. (1) The merely sensual. (2) The God-defying. (3) The obscure. (4) And—alas, the smallest of all, the really beautiful.

The reader who peruses Swinburne's poems for the first time is very likely to be astonished at the sensuality and voluptuousness of many. Thoughts and ideas of the lowest and most degraded type are as serenely discussed as the highest ideals are wont to be by other poets. He paints for the reader all those pictures that arouse the carnal appetites and passions. Yet all is couched in classic words and in lines of such flawless beauty that one is apt to forget the hideousness of the real

meaning. Note the opening stanza of *Laus Veneris*:

“ Asleep or waking is it? for her neck,  
Kissed over close, wears yet a purple speck  
Wherein the pained blood falters and goes out;  
Soft, and stung softly—fairer for a fleck ! ”

But perhaps more remarkable than this is the daring and terrible way in which he hurls defiance at the existence and power of the Almighty. Swinburne was continually waging a hopeless war with the powers that are. The existing order of things in the universe annoys and baits him to desperation. To judge from his poems he wished neither to live nor to die. But being alive he must live, and in the end die, and the thought goads him to desperation. Had he been placed on another planet with other conditions, there is no doubt but that his morbid mind would have found some cause for dissatisfaction. And so he seeks revenge by hurling invective at the omnipotence of God. In his *Hymn to Proserpine* he voices his creed in no uncertain tones :

“ All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass and be past  
Ye are gods and behold ye shall die, and the waves be upon you  
at last.”

Not content with that and similar statements, he directly addresses Christ :

“ Yet Thy kingdom shall pass Galilean, Thy dead shall go down to the dead ! ”

And closes what would otherwise have been a wonderful poem by saying :

“ So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep.

For there is no God found stronger than death ; and death is a sleep ! ”

In the *Garden of Proserpine* he voices the same awful doctrine :

“ That no life lives forever ;  
That dead men rise up never ;  
That even the weariest river  
Winds somewhere safe to sea.  
Then star nor sun shall waken  
Nor any change of light :  
Nor sound of waters shaken,  
Nor any sound or sight :  
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,  
Nor days nor nights diurnal :  
Only the sleep eternal  
In an eternal night.”

These lines will sufficiently illustrate the terrible channel along which his mind ran. Much of his

poetry is vague and contradictory. It seems as if his mind, striving to outdo itself in painting sensual pictures or uttering heaven-defying epithets, became confused by the very forces that were urging it on. Yet Swinburne's sullen and defiant nature seemed to have one weakness and that was for children. Only a very few times was he able to escape himself, as it were, and then the theme is children. At such times he has given us poems that are very gems, with nothing to mar or cast a shadow. The last stanza in *A Child's Laughter* is significant :

“ Golden bells of welcome roll'd  
Never forth such tones, nor told  
Hours so blithe in tones so bold,  
As the radiant mouth of gold  
Here that rings forth heaven.  
If the golden-crested wren  
Were a nightingale—why, then  
Something seen or heard of men  
Might be half as sweet as when  
Laughs a child of seven.”

*Children*, *The Salt of the Earth*, *A Child's Future*, *Étude Réalistie* are other short poems along this line.

Swinburne has written a great many other

poems which space forbids mentioning. With the exception of several masques, he wrote only short poems. *Atlanta in Calydon* is considered his best. No one can read any of his productions without feeling a deep regret that the skill and the genius of such a master of verse were not used for the writing of noble and uplifting poetry instead of that which was chaotic, sensual, and blasphemous.

### XXXVI. RUDYARD KIPLING (1865- ).

Before we consider the last poet of this outline, it would be well to warn the reader again that we have been forced to pass by and give but scant salutation, as it were, to many of the actors on the great drama of literature. There have been many reasons for this; none the least is that the works of many of these are, as yet, not mature enough to pass judgment upon. However, we cannot pass them by altogether.

Who, for instance, has not heard of the silver-tongued HENRY DRUMMOND (1851-1897) or of the theological work of JOHN HENRY NEWMAN (1801-1890)? These writers and divines have given us sermons, not musty theology, that mark the best of their kind in literature.

Nor must we omit the women poets. How well

do we know the poetry of JEAN INGELOW (1820-1897), the sweet lyrics of the CAREY sisters (1820-24-1871), the modest strength of ADELAIDE PROCTOR (1825-1864), and the fresh charm of CHRISTINA ROSSETTI (1828-1882).

WILLIAM MORRIS (1834-1896) and WALTER HORATIO PATER (1838-1894) have yet to withstand the sure test which time alone can impose. Meanwhile we turn to one of the most brilliant scions of the Empire,—Rudyard Kipling.

The British Isles are the center of a vast colonial empire. From them there has gone forth the impetus and virility that is gradually transforming these various diverse provinces into one nation—England, and these heterogeneous races into one race—English. The success of all this is due to the fact that the good old English ideals and institutions are taking root and growing even in the more distant regions. This being the case we shall expect that when the literary genius of this, the greatest of races, shall have been transmitted, along with other ideas, that the returns in literary achievement shall not be such as will bring discredit to the name and honor of the Anglo-Saxon race.

We believe that Rudyard Kipling fulfils, par-

tially at least, the above theory. He was born in Bombay, India, of English parents. And while he received his education in England and completed it by traveling, yet we may safely hail him as the voice of the colonies.

As he is not yet deceased, the future holds the destiny of Kipling. He has had remarkable success as a writer so far. His works of fiction number many volumes. He has also given us several volumes of poems. Kipling is, perhaps, unique in the fact that he tells us his messages in a jesting or semi-jesting manner. Often this jest turns into pathos and the effect is always strong. But while he tells us great truths in a light vein, we must not confuse him with the satirists. The age of satire is past. He never palms off as genuine either burlesque or cheap wit, but with rare talent tells his tale in his own unique way. In an introductory poem he outlines his plan :

“ I have written the tale of our life  
For a sheltered people’s mirth,  
In jesting guise—but ye are wise,  
And ye know what the jest is worth.”

We know it to be a fact that the environment of a poet furnishes his subject-matter. Kipling was

no exception to this law. But the surroundings to which he fell heir were somewhat different from the ordinary. He was familiar with the life in the camps and barracks of the average British soldier, and this gave him material for much of his poetry. He gives us phases of soldier life which we have heretofore either been ignorant of or have ignored, and always from the standpoint of the common soldier. His sketches of soldiers, officers, secretaries, rajahs and pariahs have a realism about them that is often startling and always interesting. In short his poems have a freshness about them that conventional England itself could hardly have supplied.

In addition to his prose works, Kipling wrote only short poems, and of these there are several editions now extant. *Ballads of the East and West* and *Barrack-room Ballads* are the names of two volumes. Of his short poems two deserve special mention, *The White Man's Burden* and *The Recessional*. *The Recessional* is undoubtedly the finest poem he ever wrote, and it is not too much to say that no better poem has been written in the last decade. We submit the first and last stanzas:

“ God of our fathers, known of old—  
Lord of our far-flung battle line—  
Beneath whose awful hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine—  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget ! ”

\* \* \* \* \*

“ For heathen heart that puts her trust  
In reeking tube and iron shard—  
All valiant dust that builds on dust,  
And guarding calls not Thee to guard.  
For frantic boast and foolish word  
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord !  
Amen.”

It is still far too early to predict what Kipling's future will be. Yet if past standards and precedented careers may be considered, it is not too much to say that England, sitting on her island throne, can look to her distant possessions and see there one of foreign birth but of her own flesh and blood who will uphold the literary record of the Saxons.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ENGLISH NOVELISTS

*(From Smollett to Stevenson)*

IN Section XIII we discussed at some length the rise of the novel. Its formation and the circumstances that helped to shape it were fully noted. And having launched it upon its career by Richardson and Fielding we temporarily ended the discussion. Taking up the thread of discussion here, we find that the next links in the chain were *Roderick Random* by TOBIAS SMOLLETT (1721-1771) and *Tristram Shandy* by LAWRENCE STERNE (1713-1768). Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* also should not be overlooked in this connection. Each of these men,—from the time of DeFoe until now,—had added something to its development that was original and yet necessary. It is with a discussion of

JANE AUSTEN (1775-1817)

that we begin to trace the history of those who are called novelists in the strict sense of the term.

This young author is always given a place in literature and justly, for in her chosen field she is quite supreme. Her ability to portray domestic life and to do so with fine expression and charm has never been surpassed. She writes not of foreign adventures nor of the life of the upper ten, but of the life of those she mingled with and knew,—the great middle class. Her important works are *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility*, and *Northanger Abbey*.

### EDWARD BULWER LYTTON (1803-1873)

This was a most versatile writer and his works are legion in number. Among these we note *The Pilgrims of the Rhine*, *The Haunted and the Hunters*, *Pelham*, *Eugene Aram*, etc. But of these, his greatest—certainly his most popular—work was *The Last Days of Pompeii*. Here, in a way that leaves nothing to be desired, he tells us of the lives, customs, and habits of the Romans at the time of that terrible catastrophe. With him we traverse again the streets of old Pompeii and bathe in one of the magnificent thermæ; we jostle along in the crowd that throngs the streets on the way to the amphitheater and watch the combats of the gladiators. Then comes the black cloud

from Vesuvius and the rain of hot cinders. He pictures these scenes and at the same time keeps in touch with his story in such a way that neither suffers. Altogether we must pronounce *The Last Days of Pompeii* a great work.

### CHARLES DICKENS (1812-1870)

is undoubtedly one of the greatest names in literature. Add Thackeray and Eliot and you form a triad than which there is none greater. Dickens was both a novelist and a humorist; he was the Mark Twain of England. But at the same time he scaled heights not accessible to the latter. He was a great man; he produced great works; and these works accomplished great results.

He was born of poor parents, and knew the bitter sting of poverty. But after incredible struggling he attained the summit never to be shaken, and he greets the world with a message at once cheerful and inspiring.

Some one has said that he was incapable of delineating a normal, well-balanced person, and that we knew his characters only by their eccentricities. But that criticism is manifestly unfair, for one has only to recollect how he knows his own friends and its unfairness will be apparent.

But in spite of criticism, favorable or adverse, it cannot be doubted that Dickens did some things that are criteria of great genius. First, he gave us an insight into London's great underworld, and that with all the skill of a sleuth. Second, he did much to scatter world-wide the idea of Christmas cheer and all the thoughts and customs of that occasion which we so highly prize. Third, he drew attention to great abuses, *e. g.*, the fagging system in the secondary schools, and in short showed us that children have hearts, tender and shrinking, that are too often trampled upon and ignored. Again, his characters are as common to us as our own friends and to be ignorant of Dickens is to be ignorant of those countless allusions and quotations that have imbedded themselves in our expressions.

His masterpiece is *David Copperfield*, which is supposed to be largely autobiographical. Of his other works anything but a rough classification is impossible. His distinctly humorous work is the *Pickwick Papers*. But humor and pathos are general characteristics of all his works. *The Cricket on the Hearth*, *The Chimes*, *Christmas Carol*, belong to his Christmas stories. For abuses in schools read *Nicholas Nickleby*; for a view of

the underworld, *Oliver Twist*; for the greatest amount of pathos, *Little Dorrit*, and *Old Curiosity Shop*. Other works are *Bleak House*, *Dombey and Son*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY  
(1811-1863)

is the great contemporary of Dickens and, from the standpoint of sketching men and women, perhaps excels him. Though rivals, these two were the best of friends.

Thackeray was born in Calcutta, India, and was sent to England to complete his studies. After traveling and losing his money he returned to England and began to write for a living. He was a cartoonist as well as a novelist and sometimes illustrated his own books.

He was one of the great realists of this age; he believed in depicting things exactly as they were and not as they should be. He was also a satirist and, incidentally, a moralist. He was also something of an essayist and could imitate perfectly the polished style of Addison. *English Humorists* and *The Four Georges* are essays. His novels are interesting and brilliant, and while he has not attained the popularity of Dickens it is because they differ in

degrees of style and not in genius. *Vanity Fair*, *Henry Esmond*, *Pendennis*, *The Virginians*, and *The Newcomes* are his important works.

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË (1816-1855)

while not ranking as one of the great novelists is nevertheless deserving of mention. The sadness of her own life found its way into her works and gave them a melancholy cast, beautiful in its sadness. She, too, was a realist and her life was one of real sorrow, so she—in company with her sister—turned to the dream world of Literature for relief. *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, and *Villette* are her important works.

Her sister, Emily Brontë (1818-1848), was almost as gifted as Charlotte. Her chief work, *Wuthering Heights*, elicited the enthusiastic approval of Matthew Arnold, who compared her power of portraying passion to Byron.

To this period belong CHARLES KINGSLEY (1819-1875) famous for his *Westward Ho*, *Hypatia*, etc., WILLIAM WILKIE COLLINS (1824-1889), author of *The Woman in White*, *Armadale*, *The Moonstone*, etc., RICHARD BLACKMORE (1825-1900), whose one good novel, *Lorna Doone*, made him famous; and many other less famous writers.

## GEORGE ELIOT (1819-1880)

known to her friends as Marion Evans, is considered by some as the greatest writer of fiction that the English race has yet produced. Certain it is that her novels show a keen psychological insight, a discernment and delineation of character that mark her as talented beyond the ordinary. Dickens pictured city life for us, Thackeray, society life, but George Eliot gave us country life.

Like all great novelists she strives to amuse, to instruct, and to preach. As she grows older the first purpose of the three tends to disappear in the psychological knots which she strives to untangle and the moral lessons she attempts to teach.

Her life, especially the part of it that ignored marriage conventions, has been the subject of much controversy. She began her literary work by contributing to the *Westminster Review* and afterward became assistant editor of it. She spent much time translating works of a scientific and philosophic nature and through these, doubtless, she was led astray religiously. While there are many conflicting versions about her infidelity, one thing is certain, she subscribed to no existing

Christian creed. Her important works are *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, *Romola*, *Daniel Deronda*, and *Middlemarch*.

In addition to her great work as a novelist and her lesser work as a translator, she was an essayist of some note and even aspired to poetry. These latter endeavors were, however, but subsidiary outlets to the dynamic power of her great mind.

### GEORGE MEREDITH (1828-1909)

His place in literature is secure but, like other great writers, the public was long in recognizing him. However, he still seems too much like a modern writer to consider him in a matter-of-fact way in history. His principal works are, *The Egoist*, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *Diana of the Crossways*, *Beauchamp's Career*, and *The Adventures of Henry Richmond*.

### ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON (1850-1894)

Though also a modern writer, his place in literature is undoubtedly a high one. No one can read Stevenson without being impressed that here was an artist at work. In fact aspiring authors may unhesitatingly take him as a model, secure

that he is right. His stories have all the absorbing interest of Scott's works, with an added asset that they are written in and for this age.

Never strong physically, Stevenson's optimism that never wavered and the immense amount of work he performed are objects of awe and wonder. Nor are his works narrow. For a good story of pirates, there is none better than *Treasure Island*. From that he can swing to the opposite pole and discuss, in an equally interesting manner, the psychological problem of a dual personality, in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. And so on till we are overwhelmed with the prodigious strength and scope of his genius.

Among his other works may be noted *Kidnapped*, *David Balfour*, *The Master of Ballantrae*, *Aes Triplex*, *Travels with a Donkey*, etc., and the unfinished romances of *St. Ives*, and *Weir of Hermiston*.

### XXXVII. CONCLUSION.

We have attempted in a few brief sketches to trace the progress of the greatest literature in the world from Saxon savagery and barbarism to English civilization and ultra-civilization—a span of almost fourteen centuries. During that time,

from the very nature of the case, changes of an epoch-making character have taken place in every part of the mighty superstructure of Anglo-Saxon greatness. Of these many, one, concerning the manner of composition, particularly concerns us.

In the olden days the Saxon scop, sitting in a rude hut, with few of the comforts and none of the luxuries of life about him, wrought in poetical form the great thoughts in his mind because it was difficult for him to remain silent. To-day the author, as a rule, sits in a sumptuous study, with all the comforts and luxuries that fourteen centuries of progress can produce about him, and writes, not because an overcharged mind bids him and gives him no rest till he does, but because some editor has offered or will offer him so much for his efforts. In short the forces that give birth to works of literature have, in a large measure, changed from the emotional to the mercenary.

It is indeed with a feeling of sadness that we view the fact—now no longer to be disputed—that the sparkling, rushing stream of Anglo-Saxon energy is fast losing itself in the sandy deltas of sordid greed and selfish aggrandizement. And how much sadder must it be that a vocation as noble as that of writing is fast following in the

same course! No wonder that the greatest poet of the Victorian Age cries out :

“ From the golden alms of blessing man has coined himself a curse.”<sup>1</sup>

It is left to the reader’s imagination to predict the future of literature composed under modern conditions as contrasted with that produced under ancient conditions.

As to the theory—advanced by some—that literature is about exhausted, that the avenues along which it was wont to travel are being rendered impassible by competition and repetition,—we can only say that it is not for us to decide, and that it is left as a problem for literary critics to discuss. Literature is and always has been a faithful record of the lives of its people. It is this life that produces it and is the important part. And while we have some magnificent pieces of poetry and prose, we must never forget that

“ Never was poem yet writ, but the meaning outmastered the meter.”<sup>2</sup>

That we live more rapidly, that our lives are more crowded with hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows

<sup>1</sup> *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After.*

<sup>2</sup> *Indirection*, by R. Realf.

than the lives of our forefathers, no one can dispute ; and on this ground, at least, the above theory must be rejected. The slow, deliberate, thoughtful lives of our ancestors produced a never-dying literature. Shall the crowded, bustling, pell-mell life of the twentieth century equal or surpass it ? For our life has become so great, so awe-inspiring, so terrible that it can produce a mighty unwritten literature. To the listening, philosophic ear the intonations of this vast oratorio can plainly be heard. The voices of exultation and anguish, of greed, of despair, of lust, of avarice, fuse and mingle to form a melody that is new and weird. It is the heart-cry of humanity. Not humanity, savage, and roaming the primeval forest ; not humanity living slowly, and peacefully enjoying the fruits of its labor ; but humanity crowded, driven, and rendered unnatural by those forces to which some have given the name of civilization. Its literature will be an epic-song written with drops of blood upon the quivering heart-flesh.

“ The voices of immigrants bringing their longings and hopes and their dreams,  
The voices of youth that are seeking the city that beckons and gleams,

The voices of lust and of power, the voices of sin and of shame,  
The clinking of gold and the rattle of dice, the sound of the  
trumpets of fame,  
The whispers of lovers, the chanting of priests, and itinerant  
rumble of wheels,  
The shouting of newsboys and fakers, the clack of innumerable  
heels,  
The tinkle of glass and of silver, in places of revel and waste,  
The whine of the unlovely beggar, the laugh of the woman un-  
chaste,  
The throb of emotionless engines, the whistle of ships coming in,  
The blare of a band and the cheer of a crowd, the steam-ham-  
mer's insolent din;

\* \* \* \* \*

A lite of the winners who triumph, a dirge for the lost in the fight,  
A song for the sad and the bad and the glad, and the many who  
    bless and who blight,  
A song that is ever unfinished, since no man may sing it aright.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Song of the City* by Breton Braely.

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(The following is a list of all the works found in the book, with a few additions. This list has been carefully selected and is believed to comprise the most important and well-known works in English Literature.)

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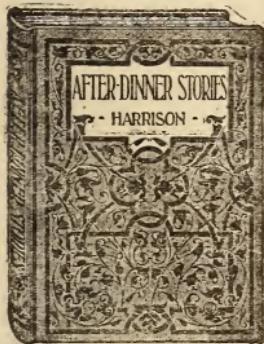
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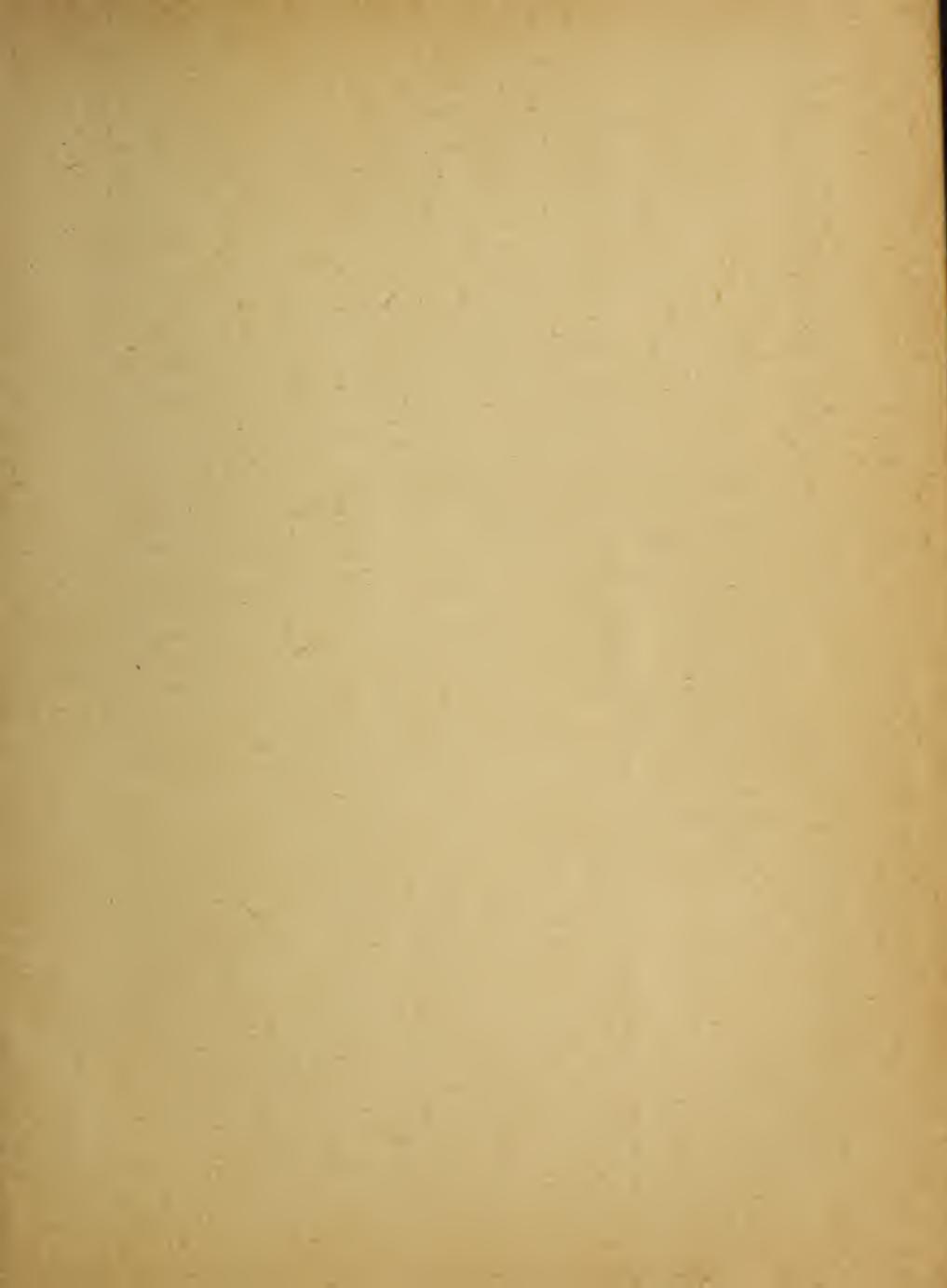
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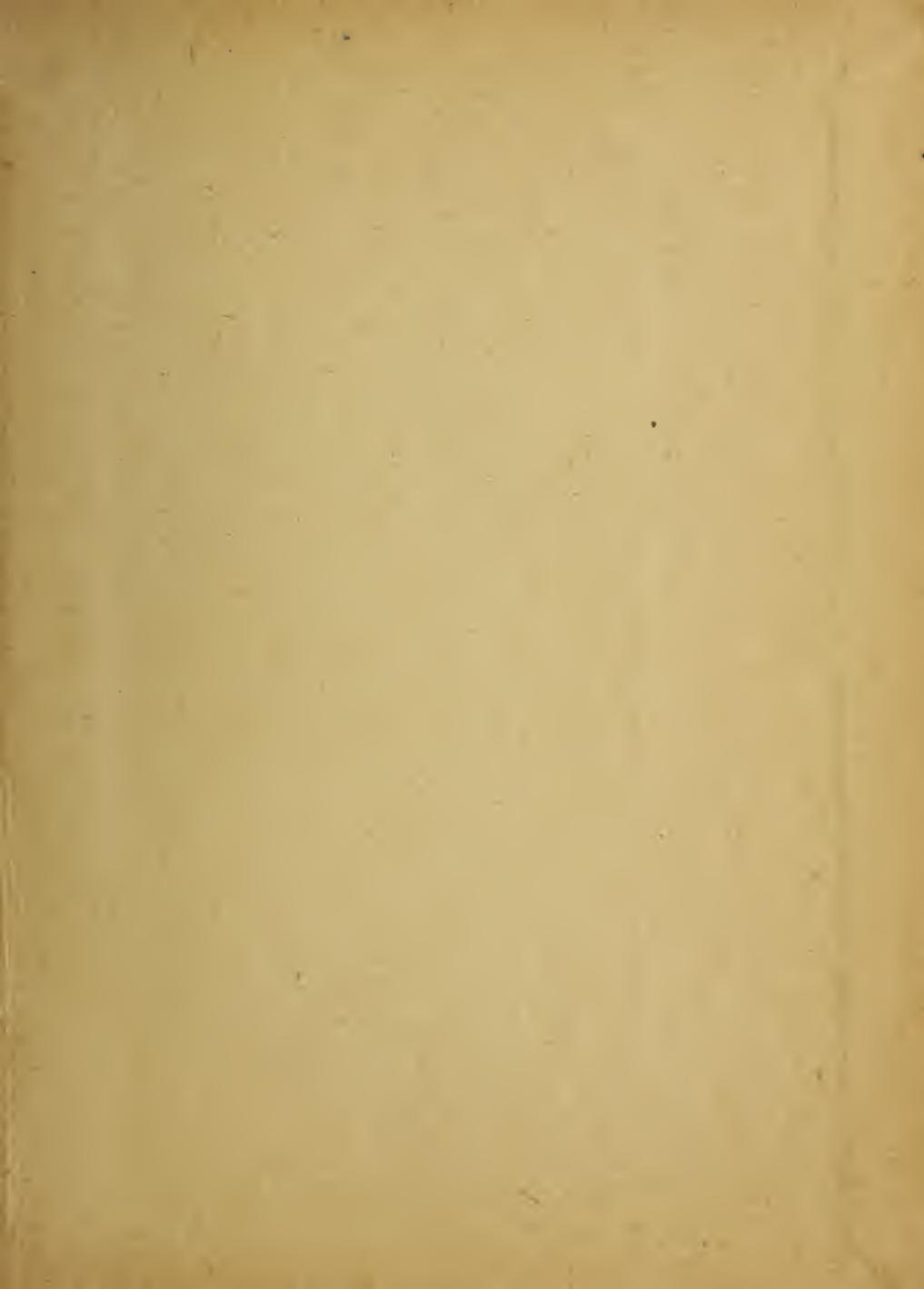
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